No. 710 AUG. 6, 1910 5 CENTS

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

THE STOCKBRIDGE AFFAIR

NOV -8 1917

Nick rolled away the heavy desk, and, lifting the flap cut in the rug, together with the trap in the floor, he shot the light into the darkness below.

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JUN 26 1936

The Stockbridge Affair;

OR,

Nick Carter's Quick Detective Work.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE MESSAGE.

When Nick Carter entered the hotel the clerk at the desk signaled to him, and as soon as the detective was near enough, said:

"Mr. Carter, there is a long-distance call for you on the telephone. It is from New York, and we were asked to give notice as soon as you came in." The clerk referred to a slip of paper, and added: "The gentleman who calls is a Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge. The message is most important. Is it your wish that I should have the gentleman in New York called to the telephone?"

"Lemuel Stockbridge? I don't know him," Nick Carter replied. "Oh, yes; of course. I will talk to him. Lemuel Stockbridge," he murmured again, to himself, as he turned away from the hotel desk. It is rather odd that he should know how to find me here, in Chicago;" for, in truth, the foregoing conversation occurred in the Great Northern Hotel in that city.

After a moment the manager of the hotel approached the detective, and said:

"Mr. Carter, if you will step into my private office, you may close the door and have the room entirely to yourself while you are talking with New York. It will be more comfortable than one of those stuffy booths."

Nick thanked the manager, followed him to the office where the door was closed upon him, and he could talk over the telephone without fear of interruption, and without experiencing the suffocating accompaniments that go with the ordinary booth.

Fifteen minutes later the call came.

For the purposes of the history of this case we will recite here both ends of the conversation that followed, exactly as if the person with whom the detective talked had been there, in the room with him.

"Hello! Hello!" the voice from New York, a thousand miles away, called to him; and it was as distinct as if the person speaking had been in an adjoining room, or only across the street. Evidently he had made arrangements to obtain a perfectly working wire.

"Hello!" replied Nick. "This is Mr. Carter at the phone. I assume that you are Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge, the gentleman who has been calling for me?"

"Yes. That is my name. Doubtless you have never heard of me, and have no idea who I am."

"That is quite true, sir," replied the detective.

"However, the name of Gordon Crandyl is not unknown to you, I assume?"

"I have a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Crandyl; but nothing more than that. I had a small case for him several years ago, but I do not remember that I have spoken with him since that time."

"Gordon Crandyl's wife was my eldest sister, Mr. Carter; that will tell you who I am. She died shortly

after their marriage; but, notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Crandyl was almost old enough to be my father, I have regarded him, and loved him, as if he were in reality an elder brother. Now, Mr. Carter, I will get down to my purpose in calling upon you in this manner."

"If you please, sir."

"Gordon Crandyl is dead. He was found dead yesterday in one of the rooms he had fitted up for his private use, in the tower of one of the buildings he owned in New York. The Columbian Building, to be precise. Shall I proceed? Do you get me clearly?"

"Quite clearly; yes. It is as if you were here in the room with me. This is shocking news. Do I understand that it was a case of death by violence?"

"Decidedly. He was shot. Shot through the temple—through the left temple, too, and he was left-handed. The pistol with which he was killed was on the floor beside the couch upon which the body was found. There were other things, too, which go far to uphold the theory of suicide, and already the case is practically closed on that basis. But, Mr. Carter, I wish to put myself on record with you, now, as entirely opposed to that view of the affair. I knew Gordon Crandyl as no one else knew him; and before I go into the particulars of the case, I want to say to you that I am morally certain that he was murdered; that the crime was committed after long and careful premeditation, deliberation, and planning. I believe, as firmly as I believe in a hereafter, that Gordon Crandyl was made the victim of the most stupendous plot that was ever conceived in the mind of mortal man. Now, sir, having relieved my mind of that statement, I will endeavor to give you such particulars of the affair as you may require, to induce you to comply with the request I shall make, that you take the Eighteen-hour-train to New York, this afternoon. That will bring you here, to New York, soon after eight in the morning. Could you make an effort, and come to me, if I can convince you of the necessity of it?"

"Yes. Wait a moment." The detective looked at his watch. "I have two hours before train time," he added. "As we are in such perfect communication you may as well use part of that time in giving me all the details of the affair that are now familiar to you. That will enable me to devote some thought to the affair while I am on the way to New York. I assume that expense is no object to you?"

"None whatever, Mr. Carter."

"Have you notified the telephone people that you might hold the wire for a considerable time, so that we need not fear interruption?"

"Yes. I have arranged all that. I have been given the most direct connection possible. I am now in a private office of the telephone company, in Dey Street, and I have made all my arrangements directly with the superintendent."

"Very well. In that case, tell me the story as clearly as you can. It is likely that I will interrupt you occasionally with questions, but please continue with the relation of the facts so far as you are familiar with them, precisely as if you were here in this room with me."

"I will do that, Mr. Carter."

"Go ahead."

"Before I describe the incidents which led up to the discovery of the body of Gordon Crandyl, I should inform you that I have been in intimate association with him for eighteen years, and for twelve years I have acted in the capacity of his confidential adviser. For ten years I have had practically entire charge of his affairs. Save for the fact that he retained personal possession of his papers and documents—I never had the actual physical care of them—the administration of the affairs of his immense estate and fortune has devolved entirely upon me. There has not been a detail of his business ventures, and of the care of his resources, with which I have not been, and am not now, familiar."

"You certainly should be in a position, then, to speak advisedly of his affairs," said the detective. "Now, as to those papers and documents to which you have referred—you say that Crandyl retained personal possession of them, and I assume that they bear some relation to your theory of the case——"

"Decidedly so."

"Where did he keep them? At a safe-deposit institution?"

"No; more is the pity."

"Where, then?"

"In the rooms he had fitted up in the tower of the Columbian Building. And, by the way, Mr. Carter, perhaps it would be well for me to give you an idea of those rooms, right now. They are unique in every way, as was his idea in fitting them up for his own use."

"Yes, please; I wish you would do that."

"You know the Columbian Building, in Fifth Avenue, of course?"

"Yes—although I don't remember that I was ever inside of it."

"The building is sixteen stories high, and it has the name of being absolutely fireproof; also it is called the most perfectly constructed building in New York, from an engineering, as well as an architectural standpoint. A tower rises above it, in which there are two more stories, surmounted by a dome, which, in reality, creates a third story in the tower. The windows in the dome appear very small from the street below, but in reality they are quite large. This tower had never been used at all until a year ago last Christmas—eighteen months ago—when Mr. Crandyl conceived the idea of fitting it up for himself. His wife had been dead many years; he was childless, and somewhat of a recluse in his habits; he was fond of his books, and of solitude, and he believed that he could find more happiness and contentment in those rooms in

the tower than he had ever known elsewhere. You get all this perfectly well, do you, Mr. Carter?"

"Yes."

"Access was had to the tower before that time, only through the offices directly beneath it, occupied then, as now, by an architect—the architect of the building, in fact. There was—there is, still—a spiral staircase from the drafting room of the architect, to a trapdoor through the floor of the first story of the tower. Mr. Crandyl made use of that staircase for a time after he occupied the tower, and carried a key to the architect's office. But, a year ago, or about that time, he had a stairway built from the corridor of the top floor of the building to the roof. A steel hood was erected over the exit from this stairway to the roof, and the door of communication was of steel, also. Three keys were provided for the lock in that door, of which Mr. Crandyl retained one, the superintendent of the building, another, and I have the third one. From the hooded exit to the roof, to the base of the tower, the distance is forty-four feet, along which a slatted walk was made, and that was inclosed by a structure of steel. A flight of iron steps, also covered, extends from the roof to one of the windows in the tower, the window being replaced by a door. The tower, beneath the dome, is octagonal in shape. Is all that quite clear to you, Mr. Carter?"

"Entirely so."

"I have tried to be very explicit about this description because if my theory is correct the person who committed this deed could have gained access to the tower only by way of the new stairway from the corridor to the roof of the building and thence along the covered walk that I have described."

"What about the spiral staircase from the offices of the architect, and the trapdoor?" the detective asked him.

"Not practicable, Mr. Carter. A huge, flat-topped desk at which Mr. Crandyl was in the habit of doing his writing, stands directly upon the trapdoor. The spiral staircase has not been used since the new stairway was completed. Now, a word as to the rooms in the tower."

"Yes."

"There are really three. The floor of the first one of these is eight feet above the roof of the main building. The second one is fourteen feet above that, and the third—that is, the one inside the dome, is twelve feet higher. Steep and narrow iron stairs reach from the first to the second floors, an iron ladder extends from the second one, to the dome. The first and second stories of the tower are octagon, the dome is, of course, circular. The first floor, where the body was found, is the room of habitation, the living and the sleeping room; the second floor is the library. The dome of the tower was rarely used by him at all."

"All right," said Nick. "Now, suppose you get down to the facts of the case."

CHAPTER II.

A MYSTERIOUS CRIME.

"I have told you that the dead body of Gordon Crandyl was found, yesterday. It was I who made the discovery, and it was entirely by accident that I did so, because I believed that Mr. Crandyl was at Lakewood, for which place he told me he was bound when I last saw and had speech with him."

"When was that?" Nick asked.

"At luncheon the preceding day; that is to say, the day before yesterday."

"Yes; well?"

"We lunched together at the Savarin restaurant, in the Equitable Building. It was our habit to do so when we happened to be together at that hour of the day. Mr. Crandyl was a methodical man in all that he did, and he invariably started for his luncheon at the stroke of one o'clock. I think it was approximately two when we left the table. We parted there. He went to the Lawyers Club; I took the subway to Two Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, to inspect some property on Marble Hill, which was in the market."

"You say he told you that he was going to Lakewood?"

"Yes; that afternoon; within a very short time, in fact. He intended to be absent several days, possibly a week, and told me that he would notify me immediately upon his return."

"It would appear, then, that he changed his mind about the Lakewood trip very soon after you parted with him."

"Almost at once, Mr. Carter, I should say. The train he was to take was scheduled to depart within an hour of the time I left him. I should have told you that I have already made inquiries of the clerk at the Lawyers Club, and have been told that Mr. Crandyl did not go there at all, that day."

"Is it your idea that he intentionally deceived you about his intentions?"

"Not at all. He never did such a thing in his life, that I am aware of."

"Then it is likely that in the corridor of the building he encountered some person who was responsible for the alteration of his plans; or, he may have recalled some engagement that had been forgotten, and have merely deferred his departure till another day. At all events he did not go there and return, did he? Have you made inquiries in that regard?"

"No; I had not thought of doing so."

"If you happen to know where he was going, wire, or use the telephone and find out."

"Very well."

"Now, Mr. Stockbridge, have you been in the habit of visiting those rooms in the tower over the Columbian Building, at times when Mr. Crandyl was not there?"

"Yes, indeed; at all times, and without regard to his presence or absence. I have duplicates of all the neces-

sary keys. I went whenever business took me there, or whenever the fancy took me to do so, without regard to business."

"What was the specific reason for your going there yesterday at the time you discovered the body?"

"That was at the request of Mr. Crandyl, made to me while we were at luncheon the preceding day, as I have described. He had written several letters, but had left them, sealed and stamped, upon the desk, forgetting them when he left the tower. He said they were not important, and that it would suffice if they were posted the following day. I was detained longer than I expected to be, at Marble Hill, and returned from there directly to my home. In fact, I forgot all about the letters until the following day when I went to luncheon and happened to be seated at the same table where I had lunched the preceding day with Gordon."

"Then it was afternoon when you visited the tower?"

"It was two o'clock when I arrived there."

"Did you go there alone?"

"Yes; but as it happened I did not enter the room alone—the room in the tower where the body was found."

"How was that?"

"The superintendent of the building was on the roof of the building when I stepped out upon it. The day was a fine one and the sides of the covered way over the walk, were open—there are several sliding doors arranged in it on either side. The superintendent called to me and made the remark that he was glad I came because he wanted to get into the tower to paint the radiators during Mr. Crandyl's absence."

"From which I assume that Mr. Crandyl had informed the superintendent of his intended absence from town for several days," said Nick.

"Yes."

"And also that the superintendent was not provided with a key to the door of the tower room."

"No; only I and Mr. Crandyl himself had keys to that door."

"Has it occurred to you that if the case were a plain one of murder, suspicion might readily point to you, Mr. Stockbridge?"

"Certainly it has done so. But we need not discuss that just now."

"No. Did the superintendent accompany you to the tower room?"

"Practically. He came into the covered way, and was nearly the length of it behind me at the moment I opened the door into the tower. He called out a question to me, and I paused to reply. When I stepped through the doorway into the room he was not more than ten feet behind me."

"So that, in fact, you made the discovery of the body, together."

"Yes. I was the first to see it. The curtains at all the windows had been lowered, and my first impression was that Crandyl was lying there, asleep. It endured only an instant. I very quickly saw what had happened."

"Did it occur to you, at that moment, that perhaps Gordon Crandyl had killed himself? Did such a thought enter your mind?"

"Never. Not for one instant. I knew better. I know better now."

"How so? What makes you so positive?"

"I knew the man. I knew him as no one else has ever known him. It is not possible that he should have taken his own life. The idea is as utterly absurd as anything could be. It is not to be considered for a moment. That is why I have called upon you. The police smile at me, indulgently, when I voice these opinions. They act as if they were sorry for my stupidity. One of them even went so far as to say to me, 'Well, Stockbridge, if Gordon Crandyl did not kill himself, there is only one man who was in a position to do it for him, and that man is yourself. We are sure that you didn't do it, and that he did do it, and so you had better keep still and let it go at that.' But, Mr. Carter, I am not willing to let it go at that; and, besides, there are other reasons which I have not thought it wise to explain to the police—at least, not until I have seen you—which uphold me in my opinion."

"Do you care to discuss those other reasons now?"

"No. If you are coming here on that train, and will arrive here to-morrow morning, I much prefer to keep silent about them until I can explain what I mean, in your presence."

"Very well. Now, tell me all the details connected with the discovery of the body."

"That tower room is twenty-four feet in diameter, and octagon in shape; that makes quite a large room."

"Yes."

"The flat-top desk that I have mentioned as holding down the trapdoor, stands almost in the centre of the room, but not quite so; it is rather to the south of the centre. The chair which Gordon occupied when seated at the desk stands exactly in the centre of the room. That will give you the correct idea."

"Yes."

"At the south side of the desk, between it and the two windows which face south, is the couch upon which the body was lying. It has always stood close against the desk, for two reasons: Because it was in a position to obtain the best light for reading, night or day, and because the big, square desk was a ready receptacle for the books, papers, magazines, and so forth, which Gordon wished to look over. The couch was his favorite resting place, and he could pile the top of the desk full of whatever he desired to have within reach of his hand."

"Describe the relative positions of the couch, and the door by which you entered the tower room," said the detective.

"The Columbian Building faces east. It stands upon the southwest corner of the avenue and street. The tower recedes from the front and side of the building,

but is, nevertheless, practically situated at the northwest corner of it. The covered way leads directly to the most northern of the two windows that face the west, which would be somewhat to the left of the centre of a line drawn through the middle of the room, north and south. The couch on which the body was found stands east and west, with the head of it toward the west. As a consequence, when I opened the door and stepped into the room, the body of the murdered man practically faced me, although it was several feet to the south of the centre."

"I understand you perfectly," said Nick. "Now, as to the position of the body, and all the details relating to it, Mr. Stockbridge."

"The body was lying at full length, facing the west. It was on its back. The right hand was thrust into the trousers pocket—and I would like to say right here that in all the hundreds, perhaps thousands of times I have seen Gordon Crandyl in the attitude of lying down, I have never yet seen him with either of his hands in his trousers pockets at such a time. He was in the habit of tucking the thumb of his disengaged hand into the armhole of his waistcoat."

"That is merely an item. Go on."

"The left arm hung down at his side so that the hand touched the rug on the floor, and near it, so that it almost touched the fingers, was a new, thirty-two-caliber revolver. One chamber of the cylinder had been discharged, and there was a bullet hole in Mr. Crandyl's left temple."

"What more?"

"The appearance of the wound indicated that the bullet had been fired at close range—perhaps with the muzzle of the weapon almost touching the skin over his temple. I should be of the opinion that death had been practically instantaneous. The body was in a position of repose. There was nothing about the expression of the features to indicate that he knew he was to be killed, or that his life was in danger up to the instant the weapon was discharged."

"Was anything of his personal property missing?"

"Nothing that he wore or carried upon his person, if that is what you mean."

"Why do you qualify your answer to that question?"

"Because the part of my story which I am reserving to tell to you after you get here belongs, by right, to that answer."

"Very well. What was the general condition of the room?"

"As usual. There was no evidence of any sort of struggle; no indication of haste. When you approached the door that gave admittance to that room, it was locked, and in its normal condition."

"You say that the superintendent did not know that Mr. Crandyl was in the building?"

"No. And that indicates that he must have entered it at a very late hour during the preceding night. It has been the custom to leave one of the three elevators at the bottom of the shaft for him to use when he is out late; the other two remain at the top of the shaft. Whenever Mr. Crandyl was out late, and used the elevator, it left all three of them at the top; and right here, Mr. Carter, is an important and a significant point. One of the elevators—the one that was left at the bottom of the shaft for him—was still at the bottom of the shaft, that morning."

CHAPTER III.

THE ROOMS IN THE TOWER.

The detective certainly had food for thought during that flying trip between Chicago and New York.

There had not been time to go more deeply into the facts of the case over the long-distance telephone than has already been described in the foregoing chapters, but the voice and manner of Lemuel Stockbridge had been so positive in the assertion that it could not be a case of suicide that the detective was already half convinced that it was murder.

The bare fact that Stockbridge himself was the only person who was known to have ready access to that room where the body was found, and that he should be the one to insist upon the theory that a crime had been committed, was not the least of the reasons for Nick Carter's acceptance of that view.

At the last moment before leaving Chicago, Nick had wired to Stockbridge to meet him at the train, and, although he did not know the man by sight, he had no difficulty in picking him out among others who stood at the gateway awaiting incoming trains.

But, although he did not know Lemuel Stockbridge personally, he knew something of, and about, the man, and so the grasp of their hands was cordial on both sides when they met.

"I have my car here, waiting for you, Mr. Carter," Stockbridge said. "I suppose you prefer to go directly to your own house, first, do you not?"

"Yes; but only for a moment. Then we will adjourn to the scene of the crime, and do our talking there, on the spot."

"Ah! You have agreed with me in my dismissal of the idea of suicide?"

"I have given you the benefit of the doubt, Mr. Stockbridge, and also the credit of knowing what you are talking about. We will, at least, work upon your theory until we find that it cannot be upheld; we will not abandon it till we have to do so."

"I am very glad that you are willing to agree with me that far, at the least, for I am positive in what I have said."

"I believe you are, sir, as far as it is possible to be positive under the circumstances."

They had left the station and entered the waiting car, and the chauffeur had started ahead toward Nick Carter's house.

"Do you wish me to begin the talk now, or shall we wait?" Stockbridge asked the detective.

"We will wait. I would rather not discuss the matter at all until we are in the room in which the thing happened. I wish that I might have been here when it did happen; but that is not to be thought of, now."

"No."

"By the way, when is the funeral to be held?"

"To-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

Nick Carter did not remain long at his house; he entered it merely to announce the fact that he had returned, and then he rejoined Mr. Stockbridge in the waiting automobile.

In silence they drove to the Columbian Building and took one of the elevators to the sixteenth floor; then the detective spoke.

"I will ask you now to let me have the keys that will admit us to the roof, and thence to the room in the tower," he said. "I will take the lead. I wish to look about me as I go forward. By the way, what disposition have you made of the body of Mr. Crandyl?"

"It has been taken to my home. The funeral will be held from there."

"I suppose the policemen, and men from the detective bureau, prodded and searched everything they could see or touch, while they were here?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. Still, the room is practically in the same condition as when I discovered the body. I don't think that they visited the two upper rooms, at all."

Nick accepted the keys and led the way up the stairs toward the door which gave upon the roof; and he ceased talking, at once becoming intently alert.

He examined the key that had been indicated to him as the first one to make use of, and at the door he devoted considerable attention to the lock itself.

They passed out under the hood and stepped upon the covered walk which led to the tower, at the door of which, at the top of the short flight of steps, he examined the second key, and the Yale lock that it fitted.

Once inside the room with the door closed behind them—there were three short steps down into the room—the detective was amazed, although he had been in a measure prepared for the appearance of things there, by what he had been told over the long-distance telephone.

But the sumptuous elegance of it all, he was in no wise prepared for.

A priceless rug, evidently manufactured to order, and purposely to fit that octagonal room, covered the floor; the big, flat-topped desk to which Stockbridge had so carelessly referred, was of solid mahogany, as were all the other articles of furniture there, save the bed, which was brass, and of extra width and length. That stood at the northern end of the room, if such a room as that one could be described as having an end.

The spaces between the windows were filled with paintings and tapestries; two revolving bookstands, well filled, were at the corners of the desk; and everything about the appointments of the place was in perfect taste with the one idea of comfort never, for a moment, forgotten or neglected.

The couch which Stockbridge had described over the telephone, was in its place at the south side of the desk—really the back of the desk. An electric bulb hung suspended from the ceiling directly above the head of it, and a droplight stood upon the desk beside it.

The detective took in all these details at a glance. Then he strode first to one window and then another, looking out upon the panoramic scene below.

"Well," he said presently, "I don't blame the man for wanting to live here. The solitude, the isolation, is perfect, and the world was at his feet. I'll take a look at those upper rooms, now, and I will ask you to remain here while I do so. That reminds me; a moment ago you said that you did not think the officers who were here, visited those rooms; are you certain as to that?"

"No. On second thought I believe that two of them did go above and look around a bit; but I am quite sure that nothing was disturbed."

"You have been to those rooms since the thing happened?"

"Yes."

"To both of them?"

"Yes."

"You found things there about as you last saw them?"

"I found the appreciable things—the things that are in sight—as they were when I last saw them; yes."

"That is a qualified answer. Just what do you mean to imply by it?"

"That is a part of the story that is still to be related to you."

"Nevertheless, tell me now, in half a dozen words, what it is; that is, to what it refers."

"Mr. Carter, told in one clear statement which you can comprehend, Mr. Crandyl's papers have been tampered with, and many of them have been materially altered from their original meanings. The fireproof safe that you will find on the next floor above us in which he kept his papers, has been opened by hands that were strangers to the real contents of the safe. After you have made your preliminary examination and have returned to me here, I will explain how I know this."

The detective uttered a low whistle.

He had not been at all prepared for such a statement, and he did not know what to make of it.

For a moment he looked curiously at his companion, wondering if he had been deceived in the character of the man, and if there were depths there which he had not suspected.

But he dismissed the thought almost as soon as it was born, and turned away to the steep flight of iron stairs which led to the floor above them.

Although amazement had been the detective's portion when he entered the living room of the first floor of the tower, it was nothing to the surprise he felt when he emerged through the trap to that room which Stockbridge had designated as "the library."

Sumptuousness, indeed, had been the rule in its fittings.

Again there was a priceless rug to cover the floor. An ebony table that had evidently been taken to that room in sections, since the trap was much too small to admit of its entrance there is any other manner, occupied the middle of the floor space. Where, on the floor below, there were two windows in each octagon, there was only one here—and the spaces between the windows, to the height of a man's head, was lined with bookshelves which in turn were heavily laden with the choicest books of reference, science, literature, art—with everything that the mind of a studious man might covet.

Above the shelves, all the way around the room, were framed engravings of eminent men and women; two huge ebony chairs upholstered in leather occupied either side of the table, and near one end of it was another couch not unlike the one on the floor below, save that it was of ebony.

Luxury, taste, convenience, solitude, and comfort had been the rule in the arrangement of that room.

There was an air of business matters there, too, in the steel safe to which Stockbridge had referred. It stood in front of the window that faced the north, and it covered up a part of it, and practically filled all the space of that particular octagon. Beneath it the floor had been reenforced to sustain the great weight of it.

Having glanced carefully about him upon his first entrance to the place, the detective now took his stand in front of the safe and regarded it long and earnestly, recalling what Stockbridge had just said in reference to it.

"In order to have opened that safe," the detective thought to himself, "one must have had the combination of the lock. It looks to me like one of the so-called 'burglar-proof locks' which even the best of experts cannot open by sound. Anyhow, I'll try it."

He went to the trapdoor and called down to Stockbridge.

"I shall be up here some little time," he said. "Wait there for me and do not interrupt me, please. I will come down when I am ready to do so."

"Very well," was the reply.

Nick returned to his position before the safe and stood there a long time regarding it.

Those who have followed, diligently, the histories of the Nick Carter cases, will remember that Nick Carter is an expert in this method of opening safes "by ear." That is, by holding the ear almost against the combination of the lock while the dial is turned slowly.

There are men in the employ of all safe manufacturers who are experts in that particular branch of the business, and it is rarely that they encounter a lock that foils them, notwithstanding the fact that the manufacturers endeavor every year, to overcome the possibility of its being done; for there are burglars who are as expert as the professional experts; and now and then there is a man who is neither the one nor the other who can do it.

Nick Carter was one of these last, although with him it was the consequence of study and practice. In reality it was one of the many things which his father had insisted upon his learning, and he was taught the art by one of the greatest professional experts ever employed by a manufacturer.

He hesitated only a moment before he began.

Then he got down on his knees in front of the safe, placed his thumb and finger gently upon the knob of the dial and began to turn it slowly while he held his ear close to the lock, listening intently for the slightest sound that might come from inside it.

Stockbridge would have been amazed could he have seen the detective, just then.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLUE IN THE DOME.

Do not think that what we are about to relate now is overdrawn, for it is not. Go to the manager or the superintendent of any concern that manufactures safes, and if he is so disposed, or if you have his confidence, he will tell you that what Nick Carter did that morning in that library room of the tower of the Columbian Building is done every day by the experts whom they employ for that purpose.

Has it occurred to you that among the millions of men who make use of safes in their daily business, there is a considerable percentage of them who drop dead, or are killed, or otherwise drop out of sight, carrying with them the secret of the combination of their safes which must sooner or later be opened? And that, without destroying the safe itself?

Also that there is another percentage, also large, who actually forget the combinations of their own safes, and are consequently compelled to send to the manufacturer for experts to open them?

Such things occur every day, all over the world, and the literal damage done to safes by forcing them open would be immense; but the experts are ever ready to go upon these errands and to discover by the mere sound of the moving dial, and the dropping of the tumblers behind it, how the safe may be opened.

Now, there are locks and locks, combination as well as ordinary.

There are combination locks which are worked with two numbers; others that require the use of three, and these are legion; and there are others, more complicated, which require the use of four, and five numbers.

Nick Carter had determined, before he got upon his knees before the safe, that this lock was of the pattern which required the use of four numbers—which meant that the first turn of the dial to the first of the necessary numbers, should be to the right.

Slowly—scarcely more rapid than the motion of the minute hand of a clock, he moved the dial around to the right, with every nerve of hearing acutely alert.

Neither you, nor I, not being experts, would have

heard the faint sound which at last told him that he had arrived at the first of the unknown numbers; but he stopped suddenly, removed his hand from the dial, and with a pencil jotted down the number at which it had stopped. He had moved the dial completely around the circle four times and was on the fifth of the turns when he heard that sound.

Now, he moved it backward—that is, to the left, and this time it was shortly after the beginning of the fourth circuit, that he heard another faint sound from inside the lock which made him pause.

Again he had recourse to his pencil, and jotted down a second number.

Then, once more to the right, twice completely around, and more than halfway around the third time—and then he stopped and jotted down a third number.

To obtain the fourth number he moved the dial again to the left, once completely around, and part of the way around the second time, stopping once more when he deteeted that delicate click inside the lock which no ear not strained to the utmost tension would have heard.

He put down that number also, and then drew back, away from the safe.

By all the laws of combination locks, the safe should now be unlocked by turning the dial again to the right until it stopped.

He knew that it would be little less than wonderful if he had succeeded with this one, the very first time he tried it, and he hesitated to put it to the test; but at last he grasped the knob of the dial and shot it quickly to the right.

It did not stop. He had failed on that first attempt.

Again, with infinite patience, he began the task, repeating it in exactly the same manner of the first attempt, and this time he found a change in the second number—a change of just one figure; the others remained the same.

But he failed again at the conclusion of the attempt; and once more, with the same patience, he began all over again.

On the third attempt he found a change in the first of the numbers, which had been seventy-two, and now appeared to be seventy-three; but even with that change made, the lock would not open.

Once more—the fourth time—he tried it, using even more care than ever. Now he discovered, or thought he did, an alteration in the last of the numbers; the fourth one. That had been one hundred and sixty-nine, and he changed it to one hundred and sixty-seven.

Then he shot the dial around to the right—and it stopped.

The safe was unlocked. His expert ear had performed its work.

He turned the handle of the door and pulled it open, disclosing the inside of the safe to his view.

The compartment at the bottom was filled with books of account; above that, were pigeonholes of various sizes—and there was also an inside strong box of steel, which, like the safe itself, was opened by a combination lock.

This was a simple one as compared with that other which he had just conquered, and as it required only two numbers, he soon had it open, and took down the numbers of the lock, as he had done before.

You will be surprised at what he did then, for after a hasty, but comprehensive view of the interior of the strong box, he closed it again, and locked it without having touched so much of the tips of his fingers to any article that it contained, and immediately afterward he did the same thing to the safe itself.

He closed and locked it, leaving it as he had found it, and without having touched a single thing that was inside.

But the detective's object in visiting that room alone, was attained.

There was still the attic, or, rather, the dome of the tower, to be visited.

It was a ladder, almost perpendicular in its position, which gave access to the dome of the tower, and, looking up, he saw that a closed trapdoor was at the top of it. He called to Stockbridge again.

"I'll be down in a few moments now," he said; then he mounted the ladder, pushed the trap open at the top of it, and stepped into the dome.

Circular windows, like the portholes of a ship, only much larger, admitted the light, and he stepped out from the trapdoor to the floor and looked around him.

It represented that thing which in household parlance is designated as "the lumber room." Some boxes, chests, and trunks were scattered about it. In fact, that room, if it may be called a room, contained merely a collection of the odds and ends that a man will gather in his keeping for one reason or another reluctant to part with, and which there is no use on earth in retaining. You know such places and things; they exist in every household.

But there was one thing there which surprised the detective, and he drew nearer to it, and gave it closer attention.

It consisted of three huge piles of bound files of one of the New York daily newspapers.

The three piles had been arranged neatly, and with care, although the detective could see that the one to the right hand was less systematically arranged than the other one. At the back of each binding, in gilt letters that were now, in many cases, almost obliterated by time and wear, was printed an inscription.

He bent down and read aloud the inscription that was printed on the back of the bottom volume of the left-hand pile. It was:

NEW YORK CLARION

1875

Jan., Feb., Mch., Apl.

The volume next above that one was marked, May, Jun., Jly., Aug., and so on, three volumes for each

year from 1875 to 1895—sixty volumes in all; twenty volumes to a pile.

It is to be doubted that he would have paid any further attention to those piles of bound volumes of the New York *Clarion*, had it not been for the fact that the right-hand pile of the three was somewhat disarranged, as compared with the neatness and regularity in the arrangement of the others. In glancing at it he noticed that the volume which represented the months of May, June, July, and August, 1880, had been pulled away from its rightful position among the files, and was now on the top of that pile.

As he looked more closely, he discovered recently made finger marks against the dust that had gathered upon the backs of the bound volumes; and here, too, there was a significant fact.

The finger marks on the dust that had collected, extended no lower along the pile than the point at which the volume now at the top of it rightfully belonged; but they were plainly evident upon the bindings of every volume that was above that point. This showed, the detective thought, that the upper volumes had been lifted away in order that the one now at the top might be secured; and that then they had been returned to their former positions—all save that one for May, June, July, and August, of the year 1880.

And he knew that the marks had been made quite recently, because not a particle of dust had collected over the finger marks that had been left by the person who had handled the volumes.

The detective crossed the space between him and the trapdoor, and looked downward. If Stockbridge was becoming impatient, he gave no sign of the fact; and so Nick returned to the pile and took down that volume for the year 1880 which had attracted his attention, and of which there was no doubt that it had recently been of interest to some other person.

He utilized one of the chests for a table and placed the volume upon it; then he began slowly turning the leaves, scanning each one as he passed it.

He stopped at the issue of June 23, 1880; regarded the first page of news matter closely and with care, and then made a memorandum of the date of it, and jotted down the fact that two-thirds of the first column had been carefully removed with a penknife.

Then he began turning the leaves again, and farther on in the paper, he made another note of the same sort, this time referring to less than a stick of type that was missing.

Passing on through the volume in this manner, he continued to make notes concerning missing portions of the papers, until he had quite a collection of them, and could find no more.

He finished his examination of the volume, glanced longingly toward the other volumes that had not been disturbed, as if he would greatly have enjoyed going through all of them, and finally returned the volume to the top of the pile where he had found it, and passed down the ladder, closing the trapdoor behind him.

Stockbridge was standing at one of the windows gazing down the length of Fifth Avenue, when the detective returned to him; but he turned around with a smile in which no impatience was manifested, and remarked:

"Well, Mr. Carter, you must have found something up there which greatly interested you. You have been there rather more than an hour and a half."

"I did," replied the detective laconically. "I'll tell you about it, later."

"I only hope that you discovered something to give you a clue to this mystery."

"I did. I found two clues; the value of them remains to be seen."

"You are not prepared to tell me what they are, Mr. Carter?"

"No; not yet. I will hear your other story, first. The telling of it may be of more interest now, than it would have been two hours ago. I'll sit down here and smoke, if you are ready to begin."

CHAPTER V.

A NEW AND DEEPER MYSTERY.

"I explained to you over the telephone the fact that, although I have long been the personal representative and confidential adviser for Gordon Crandyl," Stockbridge began, at once, "that, although I attend to all his business matter and legal matters—for I am a lawyer by profession—he, nevertheless, retained the possession of all his papers, and kept them in that safe you have just seen on the floor above us."

"Yes."

"Now, I wish to qualify that statement somewhat. Mr. Crandyl did keep in his own possession all his original papers; but I have always held copies, made by myself, of all papers and documents which were of immediate interest to us."

"I think I understand you. You mean that you hold copies of the papers that were engaging your attention at the moment, while he retained the originals unless it was necessary that you should make use of them; in which case you returned them to him as soon as the necessity for them had passed."

"That is it, exactly."

"It was a fad of his to keep his papers so; it suggested no lack of confidence in me, for I know that he had it to the utmost. I have always had access to the safe, known the combination of it, and of the compartment inside as well. Whenever we were together in this room, and had use for any of the papers, I always went to the safe after them; and frequently I came here, when he was not present, to make copies of papers. I tell you this that you may know it was not to keep any of the papers from me that he retained possession of them."

"I understand."

"There may have been—there probably were—incidents and other things that happened in his life, back

of the time when I first began this work, that I do not know about. But I very much doubt if there was anything that has concerned him during the last eighteen years, which has not been as well understood by me, as by himself."

Nick nodded.

"I desire, Mr. Carter, to get your mind thoroughly imbued with these facts before you begin the actual work on this case. I believe it will help you in the solution of it."

"I think so, too, Mr. Stockbridge."

"In his early life, Mr. Crandyl studied and practiced law; but he abandoned it long before he married my sister. I tell you this——"

"By the way, when did he marry your sister?"

"That, Mr. Carter, as you will presently see, is a very pertinent question at this moment. I would have told you after a little, without your asking the question. My sister, Eunice, was married to Gordon Crandyl, in May, 1887—twenty-three years ago."

"There was never any child born to them?"

"No; they were childless. My sister lived only a short time after the marriage, and Mr. Crandyl never seemed quite to recover from the shock of her loss. I told you that she died; but the fact is, she was killed—and the accident happened shortly before she was to become a mother."

"It was an accident, then?"

"Yes; and a strange one. I was abroad at the time—at a German college—and my information consists only of what was told to me afterward, and in letters. She was killed by mistaking a bottle of benzine for a bottle of alcohol. She poured it into an alcohol lamp, and was holding a lighted match in her other hand at the same time. The benzine exploded in the lamp and in the bottle. She died as a consequence of the injuries she received. That is all there is to that, although the bottle that she used contained alcohol when she had last made use of it."

"Do you mean to imply that it may not have been an accident, Stockbridge?"

"I have often thought that it may not have been one. Since this terrible thing has happened, and in the light of what I have discovered since then, and am now about to relate to you, I am convinced of it."

"Convinced that the benzine was put into the alcohol bottle purposely, in order that it might explode and probably kill your sister when she should attempt to use it?"

"Yes."

"That happened twenty-three years ago, or nearly that; and you say you have found something within the last few days that has recalled it, and which has made you think that the change in the fluids was a deliberate act, and done with malice?"

"Yes."

Nick Carter's thoughts flew back to the volumes of files in the dome room, and he wondered if there could be any connection, there; but all that he said, was:

"Go on with the story where I interrupted you. You had just referred to Mr. Crandyl as having abandoned his practice before he married your sister."

"Yes. He had inherited a large fortune. There was no necessity for him to work. He preferred the life of student and the activity that the care of his property would give him. One day, about four years ago—that was before he came here—he asked me to draw his will, adding that he was so rusty in the law that he hesitated to undertake the task himself. He said to me at the time:

"'Lem, I want you to take down the substance of my desires in disposing of my property, and arrange it in legal form throughout—but do not add the attestation clause to it, because I shall want to add a clause or two, to the will, which I prefer you not to know about until the occasion arises to have it probated. You may write out the attestation clause for me, on a separate sheet of paper, and I will copy it after I have finished the will.'

"Well, that is the way it was done. He directed me how to draw the main parts of the will, and I took the memoranda to my office and drew the documents with great care. When it was completed, I took it to him, and read it over carefully, and he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with what I had done. Three days after that he told me that he had finished it, had taken it downtown to execute it before witnesses, and had appointed me sole executor—sole executor, mind you—without bonds. He also said that he had put it away in one of the little drawers in the steel strong box inside the safe, where I would find it in case of his death, in a sealed envelope addressed to me. He repeated that he did not wish me to know all the contents of the will until after his death.

"After he fitted up these rooms and moved his things here, that safe among them, he told me one day that he had written a letter to me, which I was to open immediately after I had read his will after his death; that the letter was in another envelope exactly like the one that contained the will, and was with it, with a rubber band around both envelopes.

"Now, Mr. Carter, here is the crucial point of what I am trying to tell you. If there were no other reason in the world to convince me that Gordon Crandyl did not take his own life, this one would be sufficient."

"Well, what is it?"

"After we had taken his body away from here I came alone to these rooms. I wanted to be alone here, to think, and to attempt to study out the problems that were puzzling me."

"I can understand that."

"In the middle of the night—night before last—I mounted the stairs to the library, I opened the safe and the strong box that is inside it. I pulled open the drawer in which I knew the will was deposited—for I had seen the outside of the envelope that contained it many times; as also that other sealed envelope that was with it, addressed to me."

"Well?"

"I was amazed when I pulled out that drawer to find

that there was only one sealed envelope there, where, only four days before, I had seen two. One of the envelopes had disappeared. I searched in every part of the safe for it, but it was not to be found. Then I broke the seal of the envelope that remained."

"What did it contain?"

"It contained—a will."

"You do not say the will."

"No; for the reason that it is not the will."

"Not the will that you drew for him, and to which he added other clauses?"

"Not at all the will that I drew for him, at his direction, almost at his dictation. And yet, Mr. Carter, it is drawn in my handwriting as perfectly as I could have done it myself; so perfectly that I would have difficulty in denying my chirography to any person who is at all familiar with it."

"You amaze me! And the signatures of the witnesses?"

"Although I did not know the names of the witnesses to the will, until that moment, the gentlemen who acted in that capacity are well known to me, and I am familiar with their signatures. If I had discovered them upon any other document than that one, I should have sworn to them to the best of my knowledge and belief, anywhere."

"And yet you are convinced that they are forgeries?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it."

"And the body of the will, as well?"

"There isn't any possibility of doubt as to that, Mr. Carter."

"But, Mr. Crandyl might have made changes——" Nick stopped; Stockbridge smiled.

"Gordon could not have copied my handwriting, and he would have had no reason to do so, Mr. Carter."

"That is quite true. You said something about 'sole executor' a little while ago, Stockbridge, and you called my attention to the term. What did you mean by that?"

"Gordon told me that he had made me sole executor without bonds. In this strange document that I found in the safe, two executors are named. I am one of them; a lawyer in the Marathon Building, downtown, Kilian Graff by name, is the other."

"Who is he?"

"I have told you all that I know about him."

"Is he aware of his appointment as executor?"

"I don't know. I haven't asked him."

"You have not communicated with him at all?"

"Certainly not. I was awaiting your advice. I have put that will into another envelope, sealed it, and restored it to its original place. You and I are the only persons who know that it has been opened."

"Now, Mr. Stockbridge, you must pardon the question, but it seems quite necessary under the circumstances, that I should ask it. Are you positive that there is no possibility of a mistake on your part, in this matter? That you are not deceiving yourself? The question is almost like an insult, but I must have an answer."

"Mr. Carter, I can understand perfectly your reasons for asking it. I am not demented. I have not forgotten what I wrote in that will. I even have the original notes in my possession, from which it was drawn, and I can show them to you. Furthermore, in the original—that is, the genuine document—I was, myself, the sole legatee, save for a few minor bequests to societies and charitable institutions. By this forged document, I barely benefit at all. Surely my memory should be good as to those things; don't you think so?"

"Yes. I have not doubted it. Now, have you a theory to account for it all?"

"Wait, Mr. Carter, before we get down to theories. I have told you only of the most startling of my discoveries, that night. There are other things still to relate."

"Other forgeries, you mean?"

"Yes, sir. Other forgeries, and substitutions of papers. It is the most remarkable situation that I ever heard of."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER'S STRATAGEM.

We need not go into exhaustive detail concerning the revelations of the next two hours, during which Lemuel Stockbridge told a straightforward story of all that he had discovered at the time he examined the papers in the safe upstairs.

Induced by his discoveries concerning the will, he spent the whole night in front of that safe, examining the papers it contained. The result was so startling and unbelievable that, had it not been for the evidence of his own senses, he would have thought himself in the throes of a nightmare.

Many of the documents that should have been found there, were missing, and others, sufficiently akin to them to have deceived another person than Stockbridge or the man who had been done to death, were substituted in their places.

Others that had not been abstracted had been altered by an expert hand. In every case where the name of Lemuel Stockbridge had been named as trustee, or agent, or residuary legatee, the name of Kilian Graff had been substituted.

There were five new documents found in the safe which Stockbridge was positive had not been there four days before the death of Gordon Crandyl. These purported to be copies of deeds which were marked as having been recorded more than a month prior to the death of Crandyl. They conveyed five of the most valuable pieces of New York property that Gordon Crandyl had owned; and the conveyances were all made to that same Kilian Graff, as trustee, but without naming the nature of the trust, or its purposes.

A remarkable circumstance in connection with this

part of the case was the fact that it had always been the habit of Gordon Crandyl to preserve copies of all the deeds and conveyances he made over to other persons. Neither the detective nor Stockbridge had known of another person who did that thing, but it was well known to Stockbridge that Gordon Crandyl invariably did it—and it must have been as well known to that other person who had somehow gained access to the safe and its contents.

Returning to the will again, there had been a codicil added to it, and it was this codicil which disturbed Lemuel Stockbridge more than all else that was connected with the mysterious circumstances and incidents.

It was that codicil which had induced Stockbridge to make the remarks he did, when referring to his sister, in conversation with Nick Carter. The codicil appeared to be in the handwriting of the testator himself; or, if it were not, then it was a perfectly executed bit of forgery.

The codicil will explain itself. Here is a copy of it:

"It becomes my painful, but bounden duty to make amends herein, for a wrong that I have visited upon others, and which has continued to endure for twenty-five years. It is not generally known that I have been twice married, and that as a fruit of the first marriage there was a son born. Of late I have been in communication with that son, through his attorney. Desiring to atone for the past as far as possible and having no near relative other than the son whom I have mentioned, and who does not now bear my name and will not bear it because of the conditions of this codicil to my last will and testament, I give, devise, and bequeath to Kilian Graff, as trustee for my said son, all the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, real and personal, not hereinbefore disposed of; the said Kilian Graff to serve as said trustee, without bonds, and for the stated remuneration of five percentum of the amount of the estate that he administers; the condition of the foregoing codicil, and of the trust created by it, being: That my said son shall never take the name of Crandyl, but shall continue to live under and by the name by which he is now known, which was the maiden name of his mother."

Long and deeply Nick Carter pondered over the revelations made to him in that talk with Lemuel Stockbridge; and the latter, having told all that he had discovered, and unburdened himself of every thought he had in connection with the affair, sat back in the chair he was occupying, put the tips of his fingers together, puffed vigorously upon a cigar that he held between his teeth, and waited for the detective to speak.

"Concerning this man Kilian Graff. I understood you to say that you have not been in communication with him since this thing happened?"

"I have not. I have never been in communication with him in my life. I did not know of his existence until I opened that safe upstairs," was the reply.

"Has he made any effort to communicate with you?"

"Yes. He has been at my office, downtown, three times. At the time of his last call he left this card, with writing on the back. Read it for yourself."

The detective took the card, and read aloud:

"'Mr. Stockbridge: It seems important that we should meet each other without delay in reference to the estate of Gordon Crandyl. I have letters written by him which inform me that I was named as one of two executors under his last will. Will you call upon me or communicate with me? K. G.'"

"Did you reply to this card?" asked Nick.

"No; I have paid no attention to it."

"Quite right, according to my way of thinking. The secret of this whole affair lies with Kilian Graff, Stockbridge; but it will be quite another thing to prove it. It is likely that he has so hedged himself about with mysteries that we will be able to establish nothing against him—at least, now."

"But—what shall I do with the will? I must produce it, don't you think?"

"No. I don't think! What I do think is that you would be little less than a fool to produce that will now. I'll tell you what to——"

The detective interrupted himself suddenly. He started to his feet and thrust a hand into one of his pockets. Then he exclaimed:

"By Jove, Stockbridge! I believe I must have dropped my handkerchief on the floor of the library, or else I left it there on the table. Just wait a moment, will you?"

He started away, hastened up the steep stairs and into the library. He ran to the safe. He dropped upon his knees before it, and began hastily to revolve the dial.

In a moment he had found the four necessary numbers, and he threw open the big door. Another moment sufficed to manipulate the second combination lock that was inside. He reached into the strong box, abstracted the envelope from it which he knew contained the substituted will, concealed it in the inside pocket of his waistcoat, closed the safe again and locked it, pulled out his handkerchief and descended the stairs to the living room of the tower, holding it in his hand.

He resumed his seat, blowing his nose ostentatiously. Then he lighted a fresh cigar.

"You were saying, when you discovered the loss of your handkerchief," said Stockbridge, "that you would not advise me to produce the will now. Then you said, 'I'll tell you what to do,' or words to that effect. I wish you would complete that sentence, for I confess to you that I do not know what to do."

"Oh, yes," said Nick in reply; and he smiled. "I was about to say this: Don't produce the will. Pretend that you have not found one; that if there is a will in existence, which you have reason to believe, since you drafted a great part of it, you do not know where it is. By that means you will gain time."

"But it would be a lie. It would be more than that. It would be a——"

"Well, go upstairs, open the safe, and take out the will. Bring it to me. Put it into my hands, and I will engage that in less than two hours you will not know where it is. We must gain time."

"But I will still know what disposition I made of it. The statement that you suggest will be no less a lie, than the other one."

"Nevertheless, take my advice and get the will from the safe. Bring it to me, here; now."

"Do you mean that, Mr. Carter?"

"Every word of it. If I am to assist you in the present dilemma, you must do as I say."

Stockbridge sighed and left his chair. He mounted the steep stairs slowly, still half inclined to hesitate; but he went on, and presently disappeared through the trap—while Nick Carter remained where he was, an expectant, though somewhat grim smile upon his face.

Then there came a loud cry from that upper room.

"Carter! Carter! Carter! Come here! Quick!"

"What is the matter?" Nick called out, in reply, but without moving from his chair.

"The will is gone. It is not here. I do not know where it is."

"Ah! Really? Then you have found a way to follow my advice, after all. I thought you would do so." He left his chair and walked slowly toward the bottom of the stairs. "If you really cannot find the will, lock the safe again, and come down," he called.

"But I want you to come up here, Carter."

"Not now, thank you. I have finished with my examination up there—for the present. Come down, Stockbridge, and let us finish our talk."

"But the will! Where is it?"

"Perhaps the person who substituted it for the original document has taken it back again," replied the detective mockingly. "Really, Stockbridge, if you can't find it, you're in luck, for you will not be obliged to produce it, and you will not have to lie about it, either. Come down, please."

Slowly the man descended to the living-room floor of the tower.

His face was ashen; he trembled with the emotions he could not conceal; he was dazed, bewildered, stricken with awe.

He dropped upon the chair he had been occupying and buried his face in his hands. Nick Carter was sorry for him; but he held his own counsel.

"Mystery upon mystery!" Stockbridge groaned. "Where will it all end? Carter, I have held myself well in hand since this awful thing happened, but I have been suffering intensely, all the same. I loved Gordon Crandyl more than most men are loved, more than most men can love another one. He was father and brother to me. His awful death took away the best and almost the only friend I had. Then came the additional shock of opening that safe, and making the discoveries I did. I even bore up under that, having jumped at the conclusion that you would be able to work out the puzzle. But now, this! It is too much."

"Brace up, my friend. Perhaps it is all for the best. Who knows?"

"But—I found that will in the safe, the night before last. I read it. I replaced it in another envelope which I addressed to myself as I knew the other one had been. I put it back in exactly the position in which I found it. I closed the safe. I went away. Now, I go to the safe and the will is not there. There is no trace of it. It is not in the safe. What has become of it?"

Nick was silent. Stockbridge continued:

"Is it possible," he cried, leaping to his feet and beginning to walk with rapid strides across the floor and back again, "that the murderer of Gordon Crandyl has been here again? Can it be possible? Great heavens, man, can't you say something?"

"Yes; I will say two things, Stockbridge."

"What are they? Tell me, for goodness sake!"

"The first one is this: Calm yourself and believe in me when I tell you that it is all for the best. The second one is somewhat like it: You are now in a position to say, in very truth, that you cannot find a will, although you remember that you drafted one for Mr. Crandyl, and you had reason to suppose that the finished document was in that safe. See?"

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER PICKS UP ANOTHER CLUE.

The consultation between Nick Carter and his client occupied nearly the entire day, for it was not till late in the afternoon that they finally left the building together, and parted at the front entrance, Stockbridge to go to his home, and the detective to go—well, to attend to one little matter that had suggested itself to him while he was in the dome of the tower of the Columbian Building.

He promised to be present at the funeral of Gordon Crandyl the following morning at ten o'clock.

Before they parted, however, Nick obtained from Stockbridge a key to the street door of the Columbian Building, and also the two keys which would admit him to the roof, and thence to the tower. When asked by Mr. Stockbridge why he desired to return there, the detective had replied:

"Mr. Stockbridge, if I took the time to explain to you why I do things, I would not have the time, and perhaps not the inclination, to do them. Briefly, I desire to be utterly alone in that tower, to-night, to think, to work, and to make some further examination of things. If your theory, which I have consented to adopt for the present, holds good, it follows that a person—presumably a man—has had access to those tower rooms. Now, it isn't logical to suppose that such a person went there in an aëroplane or a balloon, and therefore he must have gone there by way of the elevator and the stairs; must have admitted himself to the roof and to the tower itself, with duplicate keys, or with keys that have been supplied to him by Crandyl himself."

"That last surmise isn't at all probable, Mr. Carter," Stockbridge said quickly.

"Granted; but it is possible, and possibilities are what we are now engaged in studying."

"That man, Kilian Graff——"

"Pardon me for interrupting you. Everything points to Kilian Graff, as you were about to say; but for that very reason we must be all the more cautious how we approach Mr. Graff. The fact that he has left things in such a shape that everything does point to him, is a convincing proof that he regards himself as quite safe from any sort of implication with this many-sided crime."

"If Graff is not himself the criminal, he knows who the criminal is," said Stockbridge.

"Granted—so far as appearances go, on the face of things; but it isn't safe to jump at conclusions, even when they are so plainly apparent. At this moment Kilian Graff is like a man hiding behind a rock who raises his hat on the end of a stick for the other fellow to shoot at. It won't do us any good to shoot the hat; we must be sure that the head of the man is inside it before we pull the trigger."

"Well, I will see you in the morning, at ten?"

"Yes. I will be there."

"And, in the meantime?"

"In the meantime I shall be excessively busy, Mr. Stockbridge."

With that they parted, and Nick Carter went through to Broadway where he took a car to the office of the *Clarion*.

He sent his card to one of the editors, made known to him what was wanted, and was presently introduced into the file room and given full swing in the examination he wished to make.

That volume of the old files which included the issue of June 23, 1880, was the first one to which he gave attention. He turned to the page from which a large portion of the first column had been cut away from the files he had examined in the dome of the Columbian Building.

When he read the article that had been cut away from the files that had been in the possession of Gordon Crandyl, and which had been carried away or destroyed by the person who had mutilated them, a great light broke upon the detective. He believed that he had discovered the key to the puzzle, and felt that now the solution of the mysterious case depended entirely upon his own ability to make that key fit.

It will be remembered that the detective found that two clippings had been taken from that issue of the paper. One, almost a column on the first page; the other, less than a stick of type from an inside page.

The smaller one was merely a marriage notice wherein it was announced that on the preceding day there had been celebrated a ceremony of marriage between Gordon Crandyl and Imogene Harmon, by a justice of the peace, in the city of Hoboken. The article on the first page was a "write-up" of the two persons most interested in that ceremony—and it was not, by any means, done in praise of either one of them.

The detective had made several notes while examining those old files in the room in the tower, and now, at the office of the newspaper, he turned to each one of the places he had noted down to refer to. Finally, when he closed the volume and turned away, there was an expression of grim satisfaction upon his face.

"This promises, in some respects, to be about the most interesting case I have ever had," was his mental comment as he left the building and walked to his home in time for dinner. It happened that not one of his assistants was in the city, a fact which he regretted, for the detective could have made good use of Chick, or Patsy, just then.

There were so many irons in the fire of the case that it seemed next to impossible for him to attend to the "heating" of all of them, unaided; but there was no help for it, and so, after he had eaten his dinner and rested a short time, he started out again, determined to pass the greater part of that night in the tower rooms of the Columbian Building.

It was after nine o'clock when he arrived there. He had asked the superintendent of the building to leave one of the elevators at the bottom of the shaft for him, and he was not greatly surprised to find that the superintendent was there in person, waiting for him.

"It was good of you, Cosgrove, to wait for me," he said. "I should have gone to you if you had not done so, for there are some questions that I wish to ask you, and also one small thing that I want you to do for me before I go into the tower."

"Very well, sir. I am at your disposal, for all that you want me to do." This was said while they were shooting upward through the elevator shaft.

"You were fond of your employer, weren't you, Cosgrove?" the detective asked as they stepped from the elevator at the top floor.

"More than ordinarily so, sir. I came here when the building was first opened for business, and I have been here ever since. There never was a word of dissension between Mr. Crandyl and me."

"Do you know what persons have been in the habit of visiting him, or calling upon him, in those rooms in the tower, since he has been occupying them regularly?" the detective asked.

"No persons at all, sir. I had strict orders as to that; so did the boys in the elevators. No one was ever taken to the tower. The answer to all inquiries for Mr. Crandyl, no matter by whom made, or what the pretext might be, was, invariably, 'Mr. Crandyl is not in the building.'"

"Well, he has at one time or another taken some person or persons to the tower with him, has he not?"

"Never, sir, to my knowledge. Indeed, I might almost say that I know he never has done so. The one great reason why he fixed up those rooms and occupied them as he did, was to secure perfect isolation. Our orders were very strict in regard to that. Even I would have been discharged without ceremony if I had disobeyed them."

"Do you carry a key to the door which gives admittance to the tower?"

"No, sir; I have never had one in my possession. I have a key which unlocks the door to the roof, at the head of these stairs here. Mr. Crandyl and Mr. Stockbridge were the only persons who had a key to the other door."

"Before this stairway was built, Mr. Crandyl reached the tower by passing through the offices of the architect, directly under it, and by means of the spiral staircase which ascends from the architect's draughting room, did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that spiral staircase there yet?"

"Yes, sir; but the trapdoor at the top of it is held down by the big mahogany desk in the tower room."

"I stopped here because I want you to take me into the architect's offices so that I may examine that spiral staircase," said the detective. "Before we do that, tell me what arrangements Mr. Crandyl made with you about keeping his rooms in order."

"My wife has always attended to that duty, sir. He punched an electric button every morning when he was ready to have her tidy up the rooms. Every Monday forenoon she gave them a general cleaning."

"Was it Mr. Crandyl's habit to remain in the rooms while she was cleaning them?"

"Sometimes he did so; sometimes he did not. He was usually there while she put the rooms to rights in the morning. But there was very little cleaning to do, even Mondays. Mr. Crandyl was an exceptionally tidy man, and here, so high up in the air, there is very little dust to gather on things."

"Was Mr. Crandyl in the rooms when your wife did the cleaning last Monday?"

"No, sir. He went out as soon as she went to the tower room. He always waited for her to go to them, because she had no key. There is, as you know, a spring lock on the door, and she had only to close it on leaving the tower. He told her, when he went away that morning, to be sure to see that the door was locked when she left it, because he should not return. He expected to go out of town for a few days—I think he said to Lakewood, New Jersey, but I am not certain about that. It was the day after that—Tuesday, sir—when Mr. Stockbridge discovered the dead body."

"Thank you. We will visit the architect's rooms now, if you please."

From a bunch of keys the superintendent selected one which admitted them to the offices of the architect, and, although the detective had seen the name on the door before, he paused before it now to read it again, for it had attained a new interest to him during the last few hours. The inscription upon the glass of the door was:

MILTON B. HARMON
Architect.

Nick said nothing about the interest which the name awakened in him, although he was determined to look closely into the character and standing of the man who bore it.

He passed into the private office of the architect first, and stood inside the door after the superintendent had switched on the lights.

There was a flat-topped desk in the middle of the room. Against one of the walls of the room, so that it faced whoever might be seated at the desk, was a portrait in oil of a woman of exceeding beauty; opposite it and facing it from the other wall, was a framed photograph, enlarged, of a man.

"Do you know whose portrait that is?" the detective asked, indicating the oil painting.

"Yes, sir. That is Mr. Harmon's mother. She has been dead a good many years, he told me once. That framed photograph, over there, is a picture of himself, taken three or four years ago."

"There is decided likeness between them," was the detective's comment. "Now I will take a look at the spiral staircase."

The drafting room was directly beneath the tower, although it covered considerably more floor space than the tower room did. The spiral stairs ascended from the right of the centre of the room, and the distance from floor to ceiling, just there, was twenty-two feet.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCUMULATION OF MYSTERIES.

When the superintendent of the building reached out a hand to switch on the electric lights in the drafting room, Nick seized his arm and restrained him.

"I have been thinking," he said, in explanation, "that Mr. Harmon, the architect, might be somewhere in the neighborhood, and he would think it strange if he saw a light here. I have a pocket flashlight with me which will answer all purposes. If you wait here I will ascend those spiral stairs. I won't be a momnet up there. I merely want to look at it."

"Mr. Carter! Wait a moment, please."

"Well, what is it?"

"Pardon me—it is none of my business, I know—but are you acting upon the theory that Mr. Crandyl did not take his own life?"

"For the present I am. Why?"

"Because nothing on earth could make me believe that he killed himself, sir. I don't see how any one else could have got into those rooms up there, to do it, but, all the same, I don't believe that he did it himself. Nothing on earth could make me believe that. Do you think that——"

"I don't think anything at all about it, Cosgrove. I am here to investigate, and to find out things; not to imagine them."

Nick turned away and began mounting the stairs through the darkness of the room, for only the reflection of the city lights penetrated there.

He did not bring his flashlight into use until he was at the top and beneath the trapdoor, which he knew to be directly underneath the mahogany desk in the room over his head. Then he pressed the button of the flashlight, snapped it into place so that it would turn steadily, and threw the jet of light against the ceiling.

"This ceiling has been papered, recently, hasn't it?" he called down to the superintendent.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "about a month ago, perhaps a little more than that. Mr. Harmon did it at his own expense."

Nick barely heard the answer. He was busily engaged in studying the design of the paper with which the ceiling had been covered, for it was a curious one, representing a series of perfect squares, somewhat like a nest of boxes, one within another.

From below, in the daytime, it must have given the appearance of squared funnels into which one could look deeply. If you will take a pencil and draw a series of squares, one within another, you will observe what is meant. You will create a perspective that will explain it definitely.

Nick held his jet of light closer to the ceiling where he knew the trapdoor to be situated, and presently, with a quick intaking of his breath, he discovered what he sought—the very thing that he had more than half expected to find.

He knew that the superintendent, from the floor below him, could not see what he was doing at the top

Who Is Nick Carter?

A GREAT CAREER.

The accompanying letters speak for themselves. So many letters have reached us inquiring about the personality of Nick Carter, the man, and requesting information as to the origin of the stories of his experiences, that we have thought it wise to reply to them all, and as one, in this manner.

READ THE LETTERS CAREFULLY; ALL OF THEM.

More than twenty-five million copies of the Nick Carter books have been printed, and sold. Think of it! More than a million copies of the Nick Carter books are printed and sold, in various languages, each month in every year, now. Think of that! They are translated into twelve languages. There is no other character so widely read; none other so well known throughout all the world where books are read.

OFFICES OF

The Estate of Gordon Crandyl

The Hudson Terminal Buildings

New York City

March 1, 1910.

Dear Mr. Carter:

I wish personally to thank you for the remarkable work performed by you and your assistants in the matter which was given into your hands by me, recently. The mystery, which seemed to be so profound, has proved to be simple solution in your hands. If, at any time, it should be your wish to make that case the subject of the stories of your career, edited by your first assistant, you have my permission to do so.

I have read nearly all those stories with rather careful scrutiny since it has been my good fortune to know you, and—I approve of them, and of the good they cannot help doing. Thank you again.

Pardon me if I make a suggestion. One cannot help wishing that the reading public knew more of your real self. Don't you think it would be possible to give the boys, and the "grown-ups" as well, a few lines which will help them to know who and what the real Nick Carter is?

Very truly yours

Lemuel Stockbridge

To Mr Nicholas Carter,
Care of Street & Smith, Publishers,
79 Seventh Avenue, New York City

STREET & SMITH PUBLISHERS
SEVENTH AVE. AND FIFTEENTH ST.
NEW YORK

ALL COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE FIRM

AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE
POPULAR MAGAZINE
SMITH'S MAGAZINE
PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE
HUNTER'S MAGAZINE
WEEKLIES AND NOVELS

CABLE ADDRESS, HOLLERAN
TELEPHONE 2929 CHELSEA

LONDON OFFICE
10 NORFOLK ST. STRAND, W.C.

March 2, 1910.

Dear Carter:

We are forwarding to you a letter from Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge, a copy of which he has kindly sent to us with an added request that you make his case the subject of one of your stories. We hope that you will do so at your convenience. We also desire to record our approval of his suggestion that you might find a way "to give the boys, and the grown-ups as well, a line on your real self," although we are thoroughly aware of your reticence, and your natural reluctance to do so.

Yours very truly,

Street & Smith

To Mr. Nicholas Carter.

TEN MILLION PERSONS READ THEM.

It is a conservative estimate to say that ten persons read every book that is sold, and so you must understand that ten million others are reading the same things that you are reading, every month, when you are absorbed by one of the Nick Carter histories; for they are histories, all of them. Read the letter from Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge to Nicholas Carter, herewith, and you will understand precisely how they are histories.

LETTERS FROM CARTER'S FRIENDS.

Every reader of the Nick Carter histories is Nick Carter's friend; he wishes to be a friend to every one of them. But it is impossible, with all that he has to do, to reply in person to the thousands of letters received every month in the year. That is why this method is taken to communicate with all of them at once. But, all the same, he is glad to

get your letters, and to know how you feel toward him.

A REAL AND A HUMAN MAN.

Nick Carter, you must understand, is a real man, and a human man. He is no fictitious person who finds the solution of difficult problems in the air, or in the hollow of a hypodermic needle, as at least one well-known fiction character finds his. Those are dreams; but Nick Carter gets out upon the street, and does things; he does them with brain and brawn; with vigor and muscle; with attention to his subject, and one aim for the right, and for righting wrongs. The one distinction which Nicholas Carter, as a man, possesses above all the detectives in the world who have been written about, is that he has no bad habits. He could not have them and succeed as he does succeed. He does not tell untruths, even the so-called white lies. He does not

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NICHOLAS CARTER
EXPERT INVESTIGATIONS

New York City, N. Y., March 3, 1910.

Dear Mr. Stockbridge:

I am in receipt of your letter which consists of three very pleasant parts, viz: You thank me for the conduct and care of your case which I and my assistants had in charge, recently. You graciously suggest that it be made the subject of one of the stories which, as you are aware, are prepared from my "Diary of Interesting Cases," and are compiled and edited by my first assistant, Mr. Chickering Carter; and you inform me that you are one of the many who read, with careful scrutiny, every story so published by and with my authority. While acknowledging my appreciation of your letter and its contents, I desire also to address, through you, those other readers of the Nick Carter histories to whom you have referred.

I think it is due to all of them that they should know just how the compilation and publication of the stories of my cases, which bear my name, was begun a few years ago. A relation of the facts will be of interest to all, and, I believe, will serve to bring me into closer propinquity with them. Briefly, the facts are as follows:

The present heads of the publishing house of Street & Smith were numbered among my earliest acquaintances and friends; they knew of, and were familiar with the beginning of my career as a detective, and it was my privilege and pleasure frequently to discuss with them, cases that I had

NICHOLAS CARTER
EXPERT INVESTIGATIONS

in hand, or had disposed of; and one evening, some years ago, when we were dining together at a New York club, the suggestion was made to me that I should prepare for publication the history of an unusually interesting case which I had just been reciting to them. I demurred to that, at first, fearing that it might result in a quasi-betrayal of confidence; but the further suggestion was made that dates and addresses might be altered, fictitious names might be substituted for real ones, and other changes might be made without detracting from the initial interest involved in the matter, and without destroying, or belittling, or altering the facts themselves. And so began the publication of the stories which have to do with my career. I had no idea, then, that they would find millions of readers in this country, or that they would some day be printed, simultaneously, in five other languages than my own; nor that Nick Carter would become a household word in the six different tongues I have referred to; but now I am constantly in receipt of letters from all parts of the world asking questions about me and my career, to which I have not the time, nor, in truth, the inclination to reply. Therefore, let this letter to you be regarded as a reply to all.

To my father, who was a detective before me, is due the credit for whatever ability I possess. He began, as soon as I was old enough to understand, to train me for the profession I

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use profanity or vulgarity, and he will not countenance either. He does not smoke cigarettes. He holds all womankind in the utmost esteem and respect. He honors all women. He believes that there is good in every man or woman, or child, even though they may have been imprisoned; even though they may have taken the wrong step along the downward path. He believes in reaching out a helping hand to such persons whenever it is possible to do so, and to guide them back into the right, if it can be done.

MANY THE CRIMINALS HE HAS HELPED BACK TO GOOD.

Many are the criminals—men who were once criminals, and who would be so still—to whom Nick Carter has reached out the assisting hand, and to whom he has given the needed word of encouragement; and it is a remarkable thing that even now, among the

worst of those who are still criminals, and who have a wholesome fear of him, his word will be taken at any time and under any and all circumstances. Why? Because they know from long experience that Nick Carter's word is his bond; that he never breaks a promise, once given. Is that not a reputation worth having? We think so. He thinks so, too, only he insists that it is a reputation that every living person should strive to attain.

THE MORAL OF THESE STORIES.

We claim that no stories can have a higher moral plane than those that deal with the career of this great detective, who is a detective in real life, as well as in the covers of the books about him. No boy, youth, or grown-up who reads these stories can be otherwise than helped by them. Any youth who attempts to take example from Nick Carter will do well.

have followed. I was trained in athletics and in all that the word comprehends, with the same care and diligence that was bestowed upon my mental equipment; my muscles and my brain received the same care and attention in my development, and I was taught to use them together; languages were imparted to me at first hand, while I was still a boy in years, and I was not permitted to undertake the study of a new one until the last had been thoroughly mastered. There were times when I thought my father a hard task-master, but now I daily find occasion to bless his memory for the strict rules he laid down for me to follow. His rule of life, for himself as well as for me, was: "Keep your body, your clothing and your conscience clean." I heartily wish that all growing boys would adopt the additional rule that he compelled me to follow. It was: "Repeat those nine words twice before you begin to do anything." I have not merely tried to follow that rule; I have followed it. There is no such thing as trying to do; the thing is, DO IT.

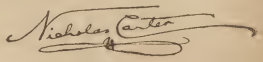
Whenever I undertook the study of any branch of knowledge, it was done on the spot where that knowledge could be best attained; among the people themselves; and you may rest assured that many other things were acquired with it; environment, adaptability, characteristics, habits, colloquial speech in whatever tongue it happened to be, temperament—the list is legion. I studied art, in the sense of free-hand drawing, not only to enable me to reproduce a face on paper, but to picture it in my brain so that I could make it from memory,

at any time. I studied sculpture; for the memory of forms, figures, outlines, development. Physiology, for deformities; no human frame is created perfectly. Physiognomy, for facial expression and contortion, for assistance in carrying out a disguise. Vocal culture, for the imitation of sounds made by birds, animals, and the voices of men and women. The list is endless, but this will give you an idea of the thoroughness of that tuition which began when I was a child, and which has never been discontinued.

I would like, before I close with this subject, to impress upon all who read, the importance of physical health, which is, first of all, dependent upon moral health. Live right, speak right, think right, do right; that is the law of wholesomeness. I love boys and young men. I want to be helpful to them. I want to make them understand that nothing is right, but right; and that nothing that is wrong can be made right, and that the worst of all wrong things is a lie.

The story of your case, under the title of THE STOCKBRIDGE AFFAIR, appears in this issue.

Most cordially yours,



To Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge,
Administrator of the Estate of Gordon Crandyl.
Hudson Terminal Buildings, New York City.

Live right, do right, act right, think right. Speak the truth, seek the truth, know the truth, live the truth. Make no rules of living in negatives; make them in affirmatives, and in positives. Honor your fathers, your mothers, your sisters, and the law. Never deceive yourself, and you will never think of deceiving another. These are some of his motives in life. Not mottoes, *motives*.

NICK CARTER WILL LIVE ALWAYS.

We honestly believe that the Nick Carter whom we know and respect will live always in the memory of mankind; that he will be quoted after those who read these lines have been dead for generations of time; that his fame and name will continue to be in household usage even when maps of the world have been altered, and Time has wrought great changes.

of the spiral stairs if he should shut off his flashlight, and so, with a snap, he released the button and extinguished it.

Looking down, he could plainly see the superintendent on the floor below, awaiting him, but he knew that the man could barely discern him up there in the denser gloom at the top of the circular stairs.

He quickly mounted two more steps. He braced his shoulders against the place where the trapdoor ought to be—against the very centre of that spot—and then, slowly, but firmly, and with gradually increasing strength he pressed upward.

He had not been mistaken.

One of the squares formed by the paper with which the ceiling had been covered, gave way readily before that pressure. It was a square space considerably smaller than the original trapdoor must have been, but it was large enough to admit of the passage of a man of less than ordinary size. Even a larger man might have squeezed through it—Nick believed that with care and caution, he could do it himself.

With his flashlight he had seen that the paper had been deftly cut with a sharp penknife, all the way around one of the squares that have been described. The cut had followed the lines of the square, which served to conceal it. Without close and careful inspection, the fact that it had been cut would never have been discovered at all.

He did not investigate any further just then. He did not care to have the superintendent know what he was about, or of the discovery he had made. After satisfying himself that the square space above the spiral stairs was movable, and that the big desk on the floor over his head which was supposed to hold down the trapdoor, did not prevent its practicability, he descended the stairs rapidly, and soon stood on the floor beside the superintendent.

"Now, switch on the lights for a moment," he said. "We will take a chance of the light being seen from the outside."

It was done. From the floor the ceiling appeared as it has already been described, and it seemed artistic. The papering of that ceiling and the design that had been selected, was in keeping with what might have been expected of an architect, or an artist.

The room was a huge one; it was littered with drafting tables, and the general paraphernalia of a place of the kind. There was nothing more to interest the detective, and he was on the point of telling Cosgrove to turn off the lights when the telephone rang out sharply.

Cosgrove looked at the detective, and Nick Carter smiled.

"Wait a moment before you answer it, Cosgrove," he said. "More than likely it is Harmon. I wasn't far wrong when I thought it possible that he might see the light. Let him ring; you can answer in a moment; he'll keep ringing till you do. I will step outside and close the door after me; then you can assure him that you are alone in the room—that no one is with you. Make what excuse you please for being in his drafting room, only don't let him suspect that another person was with you."

The detective was on the roof, gazing out over the lighted city, when the superintendent joined him.

"Well, who was it, and what was it about?" he asked Cosgrove.

"It was Mr. Harmon, sir. He said he was passing the avenue several blocks below here and chanced to see the light in his drafting room. He wanted to know what I was doing there, and I told him that I wasn't doing anything at all; just looking over the building, and that I had been a bit nervous ever since the death of Mr. Crandyl—which is the truth."

"Well, you can go to your own rooms now, Cosgrove. I won't need you any more to-night; or, if I should, I will summon you."

"Shall I wait up until you go, sir?"

"No; that would hardly pay you. I shall probably be here all night. You might ask your wife if she left the door to the tower open when she was cleaning the rooms last Monday, and if she saw any stranger on the roof that day."

"I have already asked her both those questions, sir. The answer is 'no' to both. There are strict orders about keeping the outer door closed while she is inside, and it is impossible for a stranger to get upon the roof unless I am with him."

"That will do, then. Good night, Cosgrove."

"Good night, sir."

Nick's first effort when he entered the tower was to investigate the space beneath the big mahogany desk. If it had not been for his great strength the effort would have been useless. As it was, he had all that he could do to move it from its place, although he might have accomplished his purpose by crawling beneath it, almost as well.

He wanted room for more thorough investigation than that would afford him and so he bent his energies and his strength to moving the huge desk aside and away from its position over the trapdoor.

The great rug with which the octagonal room was

covered has already been described; but, although it was priceless in value, some one had not hesitated to ruin it, as Nick discovered when he moved the desk aside.

The desk was square and large. There were drawers and compartments on either side of the space before which the swivel chair had been stationed. A smaller rug which exactly fitted into that space beneath the middle of the desk, protected the big rug from the constant wear in one spot where the feet of a person seated at the desk would rest upon it.

Nick pulled the small rug aside before he attempted to move the desk. As soon as he had done so he discovered the mutilation.

The outlines of the desk were plainly marked where it had rested upon the rug. At the centre of it, where the open space was left for the accommodation of a person seated at the desk, and over which the small rug had been kept, three sides of a square had been cut. That side of the square which was nearest the front of the desk, had not been disturbed. No one in the room could see the mutilation, for the small rug covered it effectively from view.

The only person who might have discovered it was Mrs. Cosgrove, when she cleaned the rooms, and yet, so deftly had the cutting been done that it might have passed unnoticed by her.

The cutting of three sides of a square created a "flap" in the rug which could be raised from underneath by a person who pressed against the square of ceiling, as Nick Carter had done when he mounted the spiral stairs.

By raising the square trap—which had been cut through the original trapdoor—high enough to thrust an arm through the opening, the flap, and the small rug that covered it could be thrown back. A person not too large in build would be able to crawl through the opening, and so enter the room in the tower that had been so carefully guarded against intrusion.

This, without doubt, was the method by which the murderer had gained access to his victim. There was little doubt that the same person had been there many times before the crime was committed.

Nick Carter felt no compunction in doing what he now determined to do. He raised the square that had been cut in the trapdoor and he descended by the spiral stairs into the offices of the architect.

Everything hitherto connected with the mysteries had pointed directly to Kilian Graff as the one person most directly interested in all that had taken place. Now the architect, who bore the name of the woman whom Gordon Crandyl had married so many years ago—or, at least, whom the papers said he had married—loomed largely in the perspective.

His offices had been utilized as a means of access to the rooms of Gordon Crandyl. Some person or persons having a greater or less knowledge of mechanics had not only cut a second trapdoor through the one already there, but the cutting of it had been upheld, approved, and doubtless assisted in, if not performed, by Milton B. Harmon, the architect.

Else why had the ceiling been papered with a design which would hide the fact that the new trap had been made?

Another thing, small in itself, but now important: Did Harmon know that Nick Carter had been called into the case? Did Harmon know that Nick Carter had spent the afternoon in the tower, in company with Lemuel Stockbridge? Had Harmon been watching the windows of his offices that night, as proved by the telephone, because he feared that Nick Carter might take the notion of going there to investigate?

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT IN THE TOWER.

Nick Carter was willing to take the chance that Milton Harmon might still be on the watch for lights in his room. Indeed, the detective rather hoped that Harmon would see the light there when he switched it on, and that he might even venture to visit the building, and call up the superintendent, demanding to be informed of what was going on in his offices at that time of night.

The detective would have been willing to have it out with him then and there, if it could be done in solitude, and without witnesses.

He would have liked to ask Harmon to explain that small opening through the trap—and the other things which the investigations of the last hour had revealed, although he was not quite ready, as yet, to put it up to the man.

He wished, first, to investigate the Kilian Graff end of it somewhat further.

His real purpose in the office now was twofold: He wished to devote some time to an examination of the private papers and possessions of the man through whose office the murderer must have passed in order to commit the crime, and he desired also to make a pencil copy of the painted portrait of the woman on the wall.

He performed the second one of these duties first.

Drawing paper was ready at hand in such an establishment, and he was soon at work. He sketched rapidly and well, so that soon he had the finished product in his possession.

Then with deliberation and as if he did not fear intrusion upon what he was doing, he devoted himself to the safe, just as he had done not so many hours before with that other safe. Because there were only three tumblers to the lock, and those much worn by long usage of the same combination, he had the great door open in a jiffy; nor was he long in finding what he sought—the private letter file of Milton Harmon.

Although he spent more than an hour over those letters and papers, they afforded him no additional clue to the work in hand.

There was nothing there to indicate that Harmon had any knowledge of the affairs that interested the detective, and Nick was compelled at last to climb the spiral stairs to the tower, no wiser than when he had descended them.

His first care after that was to replace everything in the usual order; and then he turned to the original purpose that had taken him to the Columbian Building that night. He climbed the steep iron stairs, and the steeper iron ladder to the dome, switched on the lights, and began a diligent search of those old files of the New York *Clarion*.

"Much of the solution of the case is here," was his thought, referring to some notes he had made while at the office of the newspaper late that afternoon.

During four long hours he labored over those files, making copious notes and comments in pencil upon a pad of paper, that he had provided for the purpose.

He searched the files of the papers from their beginning in 1875—for why should Gordon Crandyl have preserved—or purchased—those files from 1875 to 1895, unless those dates, and the time between them, had particularly to do with his career.

The fortune which Gordon Crandyl had left behind him Stockbridge had estimated at seven to eight million dollars.

By the alterations in the will and by the surreptitious juggling with other papers and documents, the great bulk of that immense fortune was diverted to the control of others than had been intended in the draft of the will made by Lemuel Stockbridge.

The chief beneficiary under the substituted will that Nick Carter now carried in his pocket was that unknown person for whom it stated that Kilian Graff was trustee. That person, Nick had not a doubt, was Milton B. Harmon. Therefore there must be some sort of understanding, if not an actual conspiracy, between Harmon and Graff.

But—had Gordon Crandyl known that the architect of the Columbian Building, the architect who occupied offices directly beneath his own rooms, was his own son? Was he the son to whom that substituted will referred?

And there arose another question.

If the architect was the son of Gordon Crandyl by that first marriage performed in Hoboken thirty years ago, and if Crandyl knew him to be that son, was it not possible that the will was not a substitution after all, and that he had altered it himself, preferring to say nothing about it to Lemuel Stockbridge.

During four long hours he searched those files, thinking along these lines as he did so.

He found many references to Gordon Crandyl, but no other one to Imogene Harmon, and not one that coupled the rich man's name with any woman.

But one thing he did find, both before and after the date of that marriage in Hoboken, and almost in every bound volume of the papers: He found places all through those volumes where columns, half columns, quarter columns, and sticks, had been cut from them and taken away or destroyed.

It was concerning the missing excerpts that he made his copious notes on the pad of paper. He had learned considerable from the visit he had already made to the *Clarion* office. He intended going there again, and he hoped to acquire much more knowledge by reason of his second visit there.

Then, after he had gotten it all together, he would make out a recapitulation of the whole and he no longer doubted that he would find a story that would be of interest.

It was four o'clock in the morning when he stretched himself upon Gordon Crandyl's bed, drew a steamer rug over him, and composed himself to sleep. At half-past six he stepped out upon the roof of the building just as Cosgrove appeared from his own doorway of the little edifice at the rear of the roof.

"Good morning, Cosgrove," the detective said, in greeting. "If your wife is there I would like to ask her one question. Will you call her?"

"Certainly, sir. May I ask——"

"No, Cosgrove, you may not ask. I haven't time to explain things to you, but all your questions will be answered before long. Ah, good morning, Mrs. Cos-

grove. Your husband tells me that you cleaned Mr. Crandyl's rooms as usual, last Monday?"

"Yes, sir."

"You did not leave the outer door ajar at any time while you were so engaged?"

"No, sir; I never do that."

"Well, now, suppose there was some article in your rooms which you needed in doing the cleaning, and which you had forgotten to take with you. You would have to return here for it, wouldn't you?"

"No, sir; I should manage without it, no matter what it happened to be. I have no key to that door, and my instructions have been never to leave it unlocked."

"I see. Well, we will pass that. Now, I find, beneath the desk in there, in the space under it where a man sits, that the big, octagonal-shaped rug has been cut with a knife. Did you know that was so?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long a time have you known it to be like that?"

"Always. It was so when we put the rug down."

"What!" Nick was astonished, and he did not disguise the fact. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Crandyl knew about it?"

"Well, sir, I suppose he did. I never mentioned it to him, nor did he ever mention it to me; but there is no reason why he did not know about it. It was his rug. He had it made to order, especially for that room, at the same time the stairs were built from the top floor of the building to the roof. That big, square desk was brought here at the same time as the rug, the very day when the work on the stairs and on this walk and its covering was finished."

"Do you know who made the rug for Mr. Crandyl?" Nick asked.

"Yes, sir. Bevarian & Otero, in Broadway, near——"

"Yes; I know the firm."

"Who put that in its place in the room?"

"They sent a man with it, to do that, sir. Particular directions had been given about the laying of the rug—it was a very expensive one, sir."

"Did the desk arrive here at the same time, Mrs. Cosgrove?"

"It was here an hour before the rug came, sir."

"Who put that in its place in the room?"

"The men who brought it here; the man who had charge of the rug helped them and told them what to do."

"Where were you and your husband at that time?"

"We were here, sir."

"Where was Mr. Crandyl?"

"He was abroad, sir; in Europe. He returned the following week."

"He was not so particular at that time about the door to the tower being open?"

"No, sir. He went away when they began to build the stairs and to make the other alterations. He had not fitted his rooms up so beautifully, then, and before he went away he packed everything in the rooms, and covered them with clothes and things, so that the men could work. While he was gone we had all that decorating work done. The rug and the desk and all the furniture that is in that lower room, were new at that time. Everything was especially made to order."

"So the workmen practically had the run of the rooms, then, did they?"

"Of that lower room, yes, sir; but not of the upper ones—the one that he called the library, and the room in the dome. My husband put an iron bar across the trapdoor that opens into the library, and locked it."

"I see. And you have always supposed that Mr. Crandyl was aware of the fact that his expensive rug, that he had had made to order at enormous cost, had a flap cut in the middle of it?"

"Yes, sir. I don't see how he did not know it."

"The rug was down, and the big desk was in place upon the rug, when he returned, wasn't it, Mrs. Cosgrove?"

"Yes, sir."

"What about that small rug that fits into the open space under the desk?"

"That came with the big rug, sir. Mr. Crandyl spoke about that. He said he did not order it, but he supposed the rug people thought it necessary to protect the other one, and that he liked it, if they did."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cosgrove. That is all for the present. Now, Cosgrove, what time does Mr. Harmon arrive at his office, as a rule?"

"Oh, he is rarely here till the afternoon, sir," replied the superintendent. "He has an architectural manager who attends to all the detail work of the office. He is seldom in his office before four, or half-past four in the afternoon, but he frequently remains there until late at night."

"Oh, I see. Do you let him out of the building when he is through?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you happen to remember if he was here until a late hour last Monday night?"

"No, sir; he was not here that night. He has not been here any night this week, sir."

"All right. Thank you. I think, now, that I will call upon those rug dealers," said the detective, and he turned away.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK.

Nick Carter hurried around into Broadway and walked rapidly until he came to a sign over a most pretentious entrance, which read:

BEVARIAN & OTERO
RUGS

Entering the store, he inquired for the manager, and when that obsequious Armenian made his appearance, the detective said to him:

"I represent Mr. Lemuel Stockbridge, who has charge of the affairs of Mr. Gordon Crandyl; and Mr. Crandyl was, about a year ago, a customer of yours, I believe."

"Yes, sir," replied the manager. "I remember the circumstance perfectly well. We made a rug for Mr. Crandyl, to fit a tower room in the Columbian Building. It was made from a design that was supplied by an architect named Harmon. It was octagonal in shape, and——"

"Yes, yes. All that is, of course, quite familiar to me. What I particularly wish to know is this: Did that rug leave this establishment to be delivered to Mr. Crandyl, in perfect order?"

"Most certainly it did, sir."

"Do you personally know that to be so, or are you merely assuming it as a fact because it should be one?"

"I personally inspected the rug and made a report upon it, half an hour before it left the store, sir."

"Was there not a cut made in the rug, at or near the centre of it? A cut which was in three straight lines which met, and created a 'flap' in it, at the time you inspected it?"

"Most certainly not, sir," was the indignant reply. "That rug was one of our masterpieces. Do you suppose that I would have permitted it to go from this store if it had been ruined as you suggest?"

"You sent one of your men from this store to superintend the delivery of that rug, and to see that it was properly laid on the floor of the room for which it was designed, did you not?"

"We did."

"If that man is here I would like to speak to him."

"He is not here, sir. He left our employ shortly after that time. To the best of my belief he has returned to his own country. He was a Turk."

"Is there any person still in your employ who accompanied the Turk at the time he delivered the rug? If so, I would like to see that person."

"Yes, sir; one moment."

The manager hastened to the rear of the store. He returned presently accompanied by a low-browed, forbidding-looking Greek; a man with shifty eyes and the outward bearing of one who would be easily influenced by the sight of a few extra dollars. Nick Carter lost no time in asking that man questions. Instead, he stepped forward nearer to the Greek, and said harshly:

"How much were you paid for lending your assistance when that rug was cut that you helped to deliver at the tower of the Columbian Building a year ago? Answer, for I know you did it!"

"A—a hundred—dollars—sir; but I was assured that it was according to orders. Rackapollo, who was a Greek and not a Turk, showed me the order that he had received, to cut it. He said that the owner did not want the firm to know anything about it. It all seemed straight enough to me, then."

"But you have never mentioned the fact, here, in the store?"

"No, sir. I was told not to do so on any account."

"By whom was that order signed?"

"By the man who had ordered the rug; a man named Crandyl. I remember it perfectly."

"Do you also remember when the order was dated?"

"That same day."

"Tell me more about the order."

"It gave measurements that were very exact telling precisely where the cuts were to be made. There were three cuts, forming the letter U, only with square corners."

"Did you not know that Mr. Crandyl was in Europe at that time, or, at least, on the ocean, on his way home, and that he could not possibly have signed such an order?"

"No, sir. I did not know that—then."

"Ah; but you did find it out later? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes."

"Well, why didn't you tell, then, what had been done to the rug?"

"I was afraid to do so; and, besides, Rackapollo had gone away, and I would have been left to bear all the blame for it. I thought it would be time enough to tell all I knew when a kick came into the store about it. Then, as no kick came, I concluded that it was all right after all, and I had about forgotten it until now."

"You were in the tower room when the rug was laid?"

"Yes."

"And when the desk which belonged there was put into place?"

"Yes."

"Was there not great care used in placing the desk, so that the open space beneath the middle of it should come exactly over that cut you had helped to make in the rug? Was not a small rug placed over the cut, under the desk? Didn't you know why that was done?"

"I wasn't told—but I thought I guessed the reason."

"What was the guess that you made about it?"

"Why, before the rug was laid on the floor at all, I noticed that there was a trapdoor in that floor. When the rug was laid, the cut that had been made in it came exactly over the trapdoor. Then, the space under the desk came directly over the cut. It wasn't hard to put two and two together that the whole thing had been designed as a secret entrance to the room. It convinced me more than ever, that the order to cut the rug was all right."

Nick nodded. He felt that the man was telling the truth. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"You know that Rackapollo did not leave the country, don't you?"

"Ye—yes, sir."

"I thought so. You know where he is now, don't you?"

"I know where he was employed after he left here, but I have not seen him but once since that time. That was more than six months ago."

"Where was he employed and by whom?"

"He was made manager of a Greek restaurant in Seventh Avenue. I have heard that he got rich and that he now owns another restaurant farther uptown."

"Do you know where that restaurant is and if Rackapollo is still there?"

"Yes, sir. I know the location, and I think Rackapollo is there."

Nick turned to the manager.

"Do me the favor," he said, "to call up five thousand four hundred Columbus, on the telephone, and ask that a taxicab be sent here at once; then I want you to let this man, Demetrius, go to that restaurant with me. I will say that your firm will not be held responsible for anything in connection with the cutting of the rug, but I must know all the particulars connected with it. Demetrius," he added, when the manager turned away to fulfill the request that had been made to him, "unless you want to find yourself behind the bars of a prison, charged with complicity in a great crime, you will help me to find Rackapollo without delay, and tell me all you know about the cutting of that rug."

"I will help you, sir," was the reply; "but already I have told you all I know about the affair."

"Very well. Let it go at that—for the present."

The cab took them quickly to the restaurant in question—one of the better class of the many Greek restaurants that had lately been started in the city. Rackapollo was not inside, but he lived in rooms over the establishment. Nick Carter led Demetrius up the stairs and knocked loudly on the door of the room that the Greek occupied.

Without waiting for an answer, Nick tried the door. It was locked on the inside, but the detective threw his weight against it and burst it open, just as the occupant of the room leaped from his bed—or, rather, attempted to do so.

Nick had seized the man and thrust him back upon the bed before he could rise, and while the astonished Greek was still dazed by the sudden awakening from such deep sleep, Nick snapped a pair of handcuffs upon him.

It was a high-handed proceeding on the part of Nick Carter, to be sure. He had no authority for doing what he did, but he believed that he could better gain his ends by forcing a point. He knew considerable about the character of these people, and that they have to be taken by storm—if taken at all.

"Wha—what does this mean?" Rackapollo gasped. His glance traveled past the detective and rested upon Demetrius, and on a sudden his face blanched. It was evident that he suspected at once what the intrusion meant.

The look of impotent fury that he bent upon Nick Carter's companion, might have killed the man if looks could slay.

"You had best keep your mouth shut for the present, Rackapollo," said Nick sternly. "I am going to release your hands now, so that you can dress. After that you are to accompany me quietly and without a word,

or an effort to escape. If you attempt either until I am ready, it will be the worse for you. Understand that?"

The man nodded surlily.

Ten minutes later they left the place by the stairs which led down directly to the street and thus avoided the necessity of passing through the restaurant. They entered the taxicab and were driven straight to Nick Carter's house; there the detective conducted both men to that strong room of his at the top of the house where he bade them be seated, and took another chair, facing them, from the opposite side of the room.

"Now, Rackapollo," said the detective concisely, "listen to me. You have got just one little chance in about ten thousand to get out of the scrape that you are in. That chance exists in your telling me openly and freely all you know about the cutting of that rug that was made for Mr. Gordon Crandyl. Mr. Crandyl was murdered last Monday night, or very early Tuesday morning, and if you do not tell all the truth about that rug, you will be indicted, and will have to stand trial as an accessory to that murder."

Rackapollo hung his head. He was plainly frightened.

"I shall not bother you with questions; I shall not assist you in any way in the story you are to tell, but I will know whether it is the truth or not, and if you attempt to lie to me it will be very bad for you."

"And if I tell all the truth——"

"If you do that it is possible that you may escape the consequences of what you have done, for I believe that you have been only a tool in this affair. Are you prepared to do as I ask?"

"Yes."

"Then go ahead and do it."

"I will, sir; yes."

CHAPTER XI.

SOME QUICK DETECTIVE WORK.

The details of the confesison made by Rackapollo to Nick Carter at that time need not be given here and now; all that will appear a little later on. It opened many of the closed doors of the mystery, and supplied the detective with the few facts he required to form the connecting link between Kilian Graff and the architect, Milton B. Harmon.

As soon as the detective had received the main points of the confession, he called his secretary into the room and had him take down all that the Greek said; after that the confession was sworn to before a notary.

The detective folded the document and put it in one of his pockets; then he said to the Greek:

"Return now to your restaurant and go on with your business as if nothing had happened. If you attempt to leave the city, or to get away from me, I will find you, and it will be bad for you. If you do as I tell you to do, all through it, you need feel no alarm as to the outcome of this affair, for you have been only a tool and did not know what you were doing."

It was nearly noon when that task was completed, and the detective had been obliged to miss the funeral ceremony at which he had agreed to be present; but he sent a messenger to Stockbridge who carried a note which explained his absence, adding to it:

"Remain at your home after you return from the funeral, so that I may be able to get you by telephone, at any time to-day."

Then he drove to the main offices of one of the great safe manufactories in the city, and asked for the general manager. To him he said:

"It has never been my pleasure to meet you, sir, but you will know who I am, I think;" and he gave the manager his card.

"Indeed I know who you are, Mr. Carter. What can I do for you?" was the quick response.

"I have been informed—I don't know whether correctly or not—that it is the habit of the safe-manufacturing companies, to keep a list, which is constantly revised to date, of all expert safe openers. I am told that it is a very secret affair, and I do not wish to pry into it beyond your willingness for me to do so. I am told that safe manufacturers supply information to one another in regard to this matter. Am I correct about it?"

"Entirely so; yes, sir. But, as you say, it is a secret method of ours. We are under bonds to one another not to give out information of that character, unless it is intended to supply the ends of justice. That, I assume, is the reason of your errand here?"

"Yes. It is."

"You may ask me any questions you wish in regard to it, and I will answer you just as frankly as it is in my power to do."

"I wish you would refer to that list of yours and tell me if at any time there has been recorded upon it the names of Harmon, or Graff. If so, I want you to tell me the given names of those persons."

The manager smiled and leaned back in his chair, more comfortably.

"One of the names you have mentioned is quite

familiar to me, Mr. Carter," he said. "It is the name of the best expert in that line whom we ever had in our employ. He came to us originally as an assistant bookkeeper, but he soon developed that particular talent for opening safes 'by ear,' and was very quickly utilized in that line. But, Mr. Carter, he is now in another business; he is a highly respected man; his life and conduct are, I believe, above reproach. I hesitate to tell you to whom I refer; at least, until you have made me better acquainted with the object of your call here."

"I have called here in order to supply the ends of justice, sir. Any name that you may mention will be entirely safe with me, in case it is not the name of the man I seek. You will have to trust me, sir, without my telling you more at the present time."

"Suppose I should refuse? What then?"

"I should be under the necessity of summoning you to the witness stand and compelling you to disclose in public, matters which you can now tell to me privately, and in which you need never appear. Is the name to which you refer, Graff or is it Harmon?"

"It is Harmon."

"Milton B. Harmon, the architect?"

"Yes."

"He was once an expert in your employ?"

"Yes."

"How long ago was that?"

"He left our employ ten years ago—to study law, he said, although he afterward became an architect, and is now a prominent one, I believe. His office is in——"

"Yes; I know, thank you. Does the name Kilian Graff suggest anything to you?"

"Not a thing, Mr. Carter."

"Did Harmon, while he was with you, develop any other surprising talent?" Nick asked.

"Oh, I don't know as you could call it surprising, exactly. He was unusually intelligent and gifted in many ways. He did some surprising free-hand drawing, and once he made a copy for me of an old scroll of engrossed resolutions which time had nearly destroyed. Really, the copy was so amazingly like the original as to be almost unbelievable."

"Signatures and all, eh?" asked the detective.

"Yes, indeed."

"Thank you. That is all that I wish to ask you at present."

The detective hurried away before the manager could ask him any questions; and to Danny, who had driven him there in the automobile, he said curtly:

"Marathon Building, Danny."

The name of Kilian Graff was on the directory board of the building, and the detective stepped into one of the elevators and was carried to the fourteenth floor. He opened the door to Kilian Graff's office and entered quickly, just in time to see a man of small stature disappear beyond a doorway into an inner room.

Without waiting to ask a question, and brushing aside the clerk who would have impeded his progress, Nick crossed the room and opened that other door, passing through, and closing it behind him. The small man turned to face him.

"Well, sir?" he demanded. "You enter my private office unannounced."

"I did—yes," replied Nick coolly, helping himself to a chair that was between Graff and the door. "I came from Lemuel Stockbridge."

"Ah! Indeed! I think it is time that he sent somebody to see me; high time. I have several letters from Mr. Gordon Crandyl, deceased, in which he informed me that I was to be made an executor under his will, and—er—er—other things as well."

"May I ask if you had personal acquaintance with Mr. Crandyl?" Nick inquired. He was studying the man with care. A small man, he was—very small. Clean shaven, very dark, and nervously alert, a shrewd, keen observer and thorough master of himself. There was something about him which suggested to Nick Carter's trained eyes that the man should not be entirely unknown to him. Somewhere, Nick believed he had seen those sharp features before, but he did not remember when, or where it might have been. The lawyer's hair was dark, but his eyes were of a grayish blue, a fact which added to the appearance of shrewdness that was his principal characteristic.

"No, sir. I never met Mr. Crandyl personally," was the quick reply.

"Isn't it strange, then, that so rich a man should have appointed you as executor under his will, or that he should even have contemplated doing so?" asked Nick.

"It would be strange under ordinary circumstances, but these were extraordinary ones."

"Do you mind telling me what they were—or are?"

"I have a client who is really the son of Gordon Crandyl. For reasons which need not be given at this time—perhaps never—Mr. Crandyl preferred that his son be not named directly and by the name under which he is living, in his will. But, here are the let-

ters from Mr. Crandyl; perhaps they will explain this matter better than I could."

He pulled open a drawer and tossed a package of three letters to the detective; and Nick opened them and read them through to the end, without comment.

When he had replaced them in their respective envelopes and tossed them back again, he said, with a smile:

"They are very clever, Mr. Graff—but they won't go down. Not quite."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that they are forgeries, and that you dare not produce them as genuine in a court of law. That is what I mean!" Nick stood upon his feet and bent forward over the desk that was between them.

"Forgeries!" the lawyer cried out. "Impossible! They came to me through the post, in the regular way. Forgeries? Impossible! You are mad!"

Nick was leaning forward across the desk. The lawyer was within reach of his hand, and for a moment the detective was strongly tempted to use it; to seize the man of law and take the chances of arresting him out of hand for the murder of the capitalist—or, at least, charge him with active participation in that crime.

But he thought better of it, and straightened up; then he shrugged his shoulders significantly, turned away, crossed to the door by which he had entered, turned again, and said:

"Mr. Kilian Graff, I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but I am Nick Carter. I have been on your trail for some time. You have immersed yourself in pretty hot water, and unless you use great care—very great care, you will find yourself kicking your heels against the stones of a prison cell. That is all I have to say for the present, except this: Mr. Stockbridge has been unable to find any will, inside the safe where it should have been placed. He searched for it, and it is not there. He did find, however, that the safe had been opened by other hands than his own, and that the papers it contained had been tampered with, and strangely altered. In some cases there were substitutions. Now, sir, if you think that because of those letters you have shown to me you have any claims to put forward in relation to a will that cannot be found, it is up to you to put them forward at your earliest convenience."

"A likely story——" Nick heard the lawyer exclaim; but he closed the door behind him before he could hear more, and passed out of the office, well pleased with what he had done.

"Now," he told himself, as he was descending in the elevator car, "it will be necessary for Mr. Kilian Graff and Mr. Milton B. Harmon to get their heads together as soon as possible, in order to study out this new phase of the game they are playing. And that getting together should be done before they sleep to-night."

He felt it was unfortunate that he had never had an opportunity to see Harmon in person; that he had no idea what the man looked like, other than his view of the enlarged photograph that had hung on the wall in the architect's private office.

Suddenly he recalled the sketch he had made of the portrait of the woman, which decorated the opposite wall of that same office. It was in his pocket, and he paused in the foyer of the building to inspect it.

For a moment he gazed steadily at it; then he uttered a long, low whistle, and replaced the sketch in his pocket.

"Another mix-up," he told himself, without enunciating the words aloud. "So that is where I saw the resemblance, in that little rat upstairs, is it? Were there two sons, I wonder, instead of one?"

He entered his car again, and to Danny he said:

"Columbian Building, and as quickly as possible."

Arrived at the building, he took the elevator at once to the top floor, and walked straight into the office of the architect.

"I wish to see Mr. Harmon, at once, on very important business," he said, to the clerk who stepped forward to receive him.

CHAPTER XII.

UNFOLDING A MYSTERY.

"Mr. Harmon is not in his office," the clerk replied. "He will not be here until late; not before half-past four or five, certainly."

The detective had expected that reply, so he was not disappointed; but he had the opportunity he sought, by glancing into the drafting room, and then toward the ceiling where the trapdoor was located. He wished to know if he had left any traces of his visit there, through the trap, the preceding night.

There were none that he could see, and hence none that others might have noticed. He withdrew from the place, using his key to take him to the roof, and presently seated himself at the square mahogany desk in the tower room and drew the telephone toward him.

He called up Stockbridge.

"I want you to come here as soon as you can make it convenient to do so," he said. "I am in the tower room at the Columbian—and I have much to tell you. Unless all signs fail, I believe that we shall be able to clear up this mystery before the dawn of another morning."

"Really?"

"Yes; really. And now I want you to carry out certain instructions that I shall give you."

"All right, Mr. Carter."

"Before you leave your home I want you to write a letter to Mr. Milton B. Harmon, the architect, and that letter I wish you to deliver in person, at his office door, when you come here, now, to see me. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Say in the letter merely this: 'I have been examining the papers in the safe of Mr. Gordon Crandyl, and I find that it is quite necessary that I should hold a private consultation with you before the matters therein contained, and the consequent revelations involved, shall become public property. Possibly it will not be necessary that they should become public property. I find that it will be impossible for me to see you before evening, but I am informed that it is sometimes your habit to remain at your office in the evening; so if you will do so to-night, I will call upon you there, at eight-thirty o'clock—and I must leave you before nine-thirty, to keep another appointment.' Can you remember all that? That is, the substance of it?"

"Yes."

"Well, write the letter; come down here now and deliver it; then come straight to the tower room where you will find me awaiting you."

"You have something to tell me, Carter?"

"Yes; much."

"I will get there as soon as it is possible to do so."

* * * * * * *

"Well, did you write the letter about as I dictated it, and have you delivered it at the architect's office?" the detective asked Stockbridge, as soon as that gentleman appeared in the tower room.

"I did, Mr. Carter; everything connected with it is as you directed."

"Very good. Sit down over there; I have a short story to tell you."

"I am ready," was the reply.

"Before I begin it I want to ask you a question or two."

"Very well."

"Did Gordon Crandyl ever say anything to you about a previous marriage—before he made the acquaintance of your sister? About that marriage that was referred to in the will you found in the safe, and which, when you looked for it the last time, was strangely missing?"

"Never a word."

"Do you believe that there was such a marriage?"

"That is a difficult question to answer. I do, and I do not. Several times in the course of my intimacy with Mr. Crandyl he has made references to his past which were puzzling to me. Perhaps this possible marriage we are referring to may have been the cause of it; but I think I am free to say that if I thought about it at all, I regarded it as an unfortunate entanglement, rather than as a marriage."

"You were correct about that, Mr. Stockbridge. I don't suppose you have ever taken the trouble to examine those volumes of files of a New York paper that are in the room under the dome, have you?"

"No; I asked him about them once, but he replied evasively, and I have never referred to the subject since that time."

"Well, here is the story I wish to tell you. I have gleaned all of it from those old papers. It was partly accident, and partly care in my investigation, that I was able to get at the facts. I found that many excerpts had been cut from those files, and so I went to the newspaper office, after taking notes, and searched the old files that are there, and which are uncut. I need not give you the details of it, but from those papers I have learned the story of Crandyl's earlier experience; and this is the substance of it:

"In the month of August in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-five, a dancer appeared here in New York City, and she took the town by storm. Her stage name was Imogene Harmon, but some enterprising reporter discovered that her real name was Gretchen Graff. Crandyl was one of her admirers. She returned to her own country after the season, but was here again in seventy-six and again in seventy-seven. After that she did not return for two years, but in seventy-nine she came again, and this time Crandyl became her acknowledged suitor. She never returned to her own country again, but in June of the following year, eighteen hundred and eighty, Crandyl took her over to Hoboken, and they were married by a justice of the peace. After three months of married life, they were separated because it turned out that the woman had a husband living in the old country, and, although she may have been innocent in the mat-

ter—and we will say that she was so—it was none the less a fact.

"She died in a hospital in this city, in June of the following year—one year after the marriage ceremony was performed in Hoboken. In eighteen hundred and eighty-five, two years before Crandyl married your sister, a man went to Gordon Crandyl and claimed to be the guardian of a child that had been born to Imogene Harmon shortly before she went to the hospital where she died. Crandyl repudiated the man, and the child also, being certain that the story was a fabrication, and that the child, if it were hers at all, had been born to her several years before the time stated, and was the fruit of that former marriage.

"The affair was taken to the court, and, of course, got into the newspapers—where I got the story. In order to keep the thing quiet, and to avoid further publicity, particularly at a time when Crandyl had met your sister and was thinking of marriage with her, he made the mistake of settling an annuity upon the child, upon the condition that it should bear its mother's name. The child, henceforth, became known as Milton Benjamin Harmon.

"We may assume that Crandyl exercised some care over the boy; that he grew to manhood and was educated by Crandyl. We know that finally he became an architect, and that at the present time he occupies offices in this building. It is certain that Crandyl always lived in the belief that Harmon never suspected the identity of the benefactor, and that Crandyl never for a moment regarded Harmon as his son. So much for that part of it.

"As soon as I had gleaned the main facts of the story from the papers, I cabled to the little town where Gretchen Graff, otherwise Imogene Harmon, was born. I asked for a record of her birth, her marriage, and for all information concerning her. The German authorities are particular about such things, and my answer should be thorough. I expect to find it at my home when I return there.

"Now, we get away from facts and come down to surmises and assumptions. Who is Kilian Graff? He bears a strong resemblance to the picture of Harmon's mother which hangs on the wall in his office, under where we are seated now. Were there two sons? I have never seen Harmon, but there is a photograph of him also on the wall down there beneath us, and, although it was taken some time ago, that also resembles Kilian Graff in some particulars.

"That is all that I shall tell you now, Stockbridge; but when you call upon Harmon at half-past eight to-night, I want you to tell him the substance of the story I have told you. Prepare yourself for a scene; charge him with being thirty-five years old instead of thirty and with having a twin brother who passes under the name of Kilian Graff. Then, see what he says and does, but say no more than that. You will not be aware of the fact, but I will be an attentive listener to all that passes between you. That's all. I've got to go now. Keep your appointment at half-past eight."

"But, Mr. Carter——"

"I haven't time for another word now. Later—yes."

"I wanted to ask you about that will. I——"

"You will know all about that to-night, Stockbridge."

Nick Carter had himself driven to police headquarters; thence, after a consultation with the commissioner, to the chambers of a prominent judge; and then, armed with a search warrant, to the offices of Kilian Graff in the Marathon Building. He suspected that Graff would not be there, and the lawyer was not; but Nick, with the authority of the search warrant, and with two officers on guard, conducted his search in the private office of Kilian Graff.

He was in there nearly an hour, and when he came out he carried a parcel neatly wrapped in paper which he carried away with him. The clerks in the office had in the meantime been vainly endeavoring to get into communication with their employer over the telephone.

Nick went directly from the lawyer's office to his own home. There he found the cable message he had been expecting, and, having read it, he seated himself and smoked for half an hour, resignedly. At half-past five o'clock he returned to the tower in the Columbian Building, where his first care was to shove back the desk and to roll the huge rug away from the trapdoor beneath it. He had previously given instructions to the men who had been with him in the search at the lawyer's office. He only had to await the time to spring the trap he had set.

At eight o'clock he raised the trap a trifle and looked down. He could see that the lights had been turned on in the private office of the architect. He let himself down through the trap and closed it after him. Then he descended the spiral stairs, slowly and cautiously.

The door between the drafting room and the private office was partly ajar, and as the detective peered through the same opening he almost uttered a gasp of astonishment. Not until that moment had he sus-

pected the real truth of the affair; but as he looked he saw that Milton B. Harmon was in the act of putting some finishing touches to his toilet, and those finishing touches, as the detective saw them, made everything quite clear.

While he watched the man completed what he was doing, and seated himself at the desk. After another moment an electric bell rang, and Harmon went to the door to admit Stockbridge.

Nick Carter did not wait to listen to the interview he had so carefully planned; it was no longer a necessary part of the affair. Instead he passed swiftly from the drafting room to the outer door, opened it softly, and tapped upon another door. He motioned to four men who were inside that other room, two of whom were Chick and Patsy, just returned to the city, and two of whom were the officers who had accompanied him that afternoon. They followed him on tiptoe into the office of the architect.

Once inside, Nick slammed the door shut, and then strode boldly across the drafting room and into the private office, followed by his companions.

Stockbridge and Harmon were facing each other angrily across the desk, and the latter held a revolver in one hand, menacingly. He dropped it the moment he was interrupted.

"There is your man," Nick Carter said, to the regular officers who accompanied him, pointing his finger at the architect. "Arrest him, and put the irons on him. I charge him with the murder of Gordon Crandyl, with the forgery of a will, with other forgeries, with the substitution of fictitious papers and documents for the originals—and also with living a double life. Here, in the Columbian Building, he is Milton B. Harmon; downtown he is Kilian Graff, a lawyer. The toupee and wig of brown hair covers the bald pate and closely clipped black hair of Kilian Graff; you will find that those prominent, protruding, gold-filled teeth are artificial, and that he wears another set which entirely alters his expression, in the guise of the downtown lawyer. He was born in eighteen hundred and seventy-five, in Frieseburg, Germany, as Kilian Graff. His mother was an English girl named Imogene Harmon, born and raised in Frieseburg. He was brought to this country by his own father, who sought to blackmail Gordon Crandyl—and succeeded.

"Until five years ago he lived only under the name of Harmon, and then he conceived the idea of posing as Kilian Graff, a lawyer, and of winning the millions that belonged to the man who had been his benefactor, and whom he shot to death in the room over our heads. He is a draftsman, an artist with his pencil, and an expert forger, as I can establish by a former employer of his. He is an expert safe opener, which I can also prove. In that package I have left in the outer room is a small, plate-glass shelf, which, with a strong electric light beneath it, he used in tracing the handwriting of papers which he wished partly to copy, in making his forgeries. I could tell you more——"

The detective stopped abruptly. The accused man had collapsed upon the floor beside his desk. Like the majority of criminals, once they are cornered, he proved to be an arrant coward.

There is little more to tell. Graff made a complete confession of all that he had done. He had conceived the notion of the plot he came so near to carrying out after Gordon Crandyl went to the tower to live. He had bribed the carpet men to cut the rug and prepare it for him, and had seen that it was properly laid down, for his purposes. He had cut the smaller trap through the larger one; he had learned the combination of the safe in the library, as we have seen; he had removed the papers one by one, and altered them with the aid of his glass shelf, and the strong light; in like manner he had altered the will to suit his purpose. He only awaited the time when everything should be in readiness to complete his work, and that time had happened on the day when Gordon Crandyl was to start for Lakewood.

He had stopped his victim from departing by sending him a faked-up telegram at the last moment, and Gordon Crandyl had gone to his room in the tower that night after midnight—and also to his death.

That was the story in a nutshell; such was the substance of the long confession that Kilian Graff made to the district attorney. So was disclosed a mystery which, for a time, bade fair to baffle even the skill of Nick Carter.

THE END.

There is a hard knot with many side tangles in the next tale. You will find it very exciting to read how Nick Carter unties this knot. A slippery rogue, with a genius for getting off scot-free, is caught red-handed in a desperate and daring venture and brought to justice by our matchless detective. It certainly is hot stuff all right. You will be so interested it will seem as if you could not read it fast enough. It is called "A Secret from the Past; or, Nick Carter's Treasure-vault Case." The number of the issue it will appear in is 711. You'd be sorry if you missed it. Out positively next week.

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ON THE ALERT.

"I say, Mr. Purser!"

"Yes, Mr. Welch?"

"As the Mersey tunnel is finished, a lot of men and boys have been paid off. What with this and the unemployed, there are thousands over in the city and here in Birkenhead out of work."

"Oh!" I said, "and that means stowaways, I suppose?"

"Yes. It has been something dreadful of late. One or two tramp steamers have discovered so many of them after leaving that they have actually had to return to the nearest port to land them; afraid of running short of food."

"Yes, we were hearing of the unusual number trying to make a shift for the winter, poor chaps!"

"Well," continued Mr. Welch, "as you won't be able to cope with them yourselves, we have arranged for several detectives, who understand the nooks and corners of a ship, to give your people a hand to search on the eve of sailing. The 'City' boat goes out with the same tide, and they'll overhaul you both on Friday night, afer the cargo is all on board, and stand by you till your hawsers are cast off at daylight on Saturday morning."

"Very good. I'll let the officers know. I've no doubt they'll be glad of the assistance."

"All right. As they'll be on watch for some hours, you might kindly see that they have coffee and something to eat, if they want it."

"Certainly; we'll see to that with pleasure. Better, perhaps, to arrange that they should have supper with us."

"Thanks. I'll let Ridd, the head detective, know, and he'll send you word when they're likely to board you. He's a very sharp fellow, and you'll find him intelligent and agreeable."

Neither Mr. Welch nor I foresaw what an exciting time Mr. Ridd was going to have, nor how much his sharpness was going to be put to the test.

The scene was Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, England. By the Friday night at nine o'clock our cargo was all shipped, and the loading stages were withdrawn. Communication between the big steamer and the shore was practicable by one narrow gangway only, and a burly quartermaster was stationed at the head of it with strict orders to allow no one on board who had not business with the ship.

The *City of Calcutta* was lying ahead of us, and the detectives came from that vessel to make a search of ours, the steamship *Corean*, of the Allan Line.

They had found twenty stowaways—men and boys—on the "City" steamer, and had turned them ashore.

Before proceeding to go over the ship, the party of us who were to lead the hunt met in the messroom for a bite of supper. These were Mr. Ridd, his two assistants, our second, third, and fourth officers, the chief steward, and myself.

"Well, I'm blest, but here's a fine go," said Ridd, as we sat down at table. "Three boys have managed to get on board of you within the last hour or so; even after the withdrawing of your stages and when everything was quieted down."

"That be blowed for a cuffer," said the second officer. "How the dickens could they get aboard? It's not possible."

"But I tell you they *are* on board," retorted Ridd testily. "Do you mean to say that I don't know what I'm talking about?"

He seemed to be much piqued. He was a thin, wiry man, with a keen eye, and a determined face. He had been to sea, but had given it up after an accident. He walked with a slight limp, but was said to be possessed of enormous strength, and he had a good reputation as a detective. He practiced on his own account.

"How did they get on board?" asked the fourth. "From the watch we've been keeping all round, they couldn't have climbed up the side at any point. The gangway was the only way, and the quartermasters haven't left it unguarded for a minute since morning."

"That was the way they came on board, all the same," replied Ridd sarcastically.

"But how?" I asked. "They must have adopted some ruse."

"You have it, Mr. Purser; they managed it by bluff—sheer, downright, very clever bluff. I know them.

"I've turned them off ever so many steamers within the past few weeks, and once or twice they've nearly been too cute for me. They're a sharp party, I can tell you. One of them, a lad named Murphy, has a head on his shoulders. He does the thinking, and the planning, and I shouldn't wonder if we had trouble in ferreting them out to-night.

"Where do you think they were stowed away the last time I found them? Why, in one of the boats on the bridge deck. Sly young rascals! They'd stolen on board in the darkness thirty-six hours before she was going to sail, and had crept unseen into the boat twenty-four hours before our search began. I didn't know for certain that they'd boarded her, but I suspected as much. We found a number of jokers here and there, but although I prolonged the search on purpose, we couldn't come upon this precious trio.

"I suggested trying the boats, but the second said it was useless, as he'd had a man on the bridge deck all day who'd been round the boat covers and found the lacings all fast.

"I was down the gangway, on my way home, after leaving instructions with one of my assistants—Mitchell, there—who was to stand by her till she sailed in the morning—when a sudden determination seized me to have a look at those boats. Sure enough, we found them, lying as quiet as mice in the fore part of the port lifeboat."

"And how long do you say they had been there?" I asked. The interest of those present was now aroused in the three boys.

"Twenty-four hours."

"They were fighters! They must have been starving."

"Oh, they've endurance and pluck enough. They told us they'd spent the time sleeping and telling stories. They'd provided themselves with some bread and a bottle of water."

"They must be lads of some grit," I said.

"Yes, they're right enough; decent, hard-working boys, of fairly well-doing people; but, like so many more, they're out of work and half starving, and mad to get away to sea."

"And how did you get to know they'd come on board of us? You haven't explained that yet," said the second officer.

"Ah!" and the detective gave a chuckle of self-satisfaction, "that's just where we come in and shine, while you people get fooled. I'm not paid for this job for nothing. It's a good one; but I wouldn't have so many steamers on hand if I let my wits go a-wool-gathering or allowed myself to be easily guyed."

"Oh, no doubt you're wonderfully smart at finding stowaways," growled Mr. Andrews, the third officer, whose position on board made him specially responsible regarding this matter.

"The quartermaster at the gangway told me on my coming on board, that you were standing by, talking to him, when two boys came up with a clothes bag for one of the men forward," said Ridd, addressing Mr. Andrews, upon whom he had fixed a severe eye.

"That's so; what about it?" replied the third snappishly, riled by the detective's cocky tone.

"Well, that was a pure guy," said Ridd in a provokingly sarcastic strain. "Half an hour before that, as I learned from the watchman at the gate and also from the quartermaster, a lad appeared with a letter for the bo's'n, saying it was very important and he must see him, as he was to get an answer. He was quite polite and seemed anxious about the message. He said he believed there was money in the letter. This fetched, and he fooled and got past them both.

"That was the lad Murphy, and without a doubt the letter had been faked up by himself. Then, along came his chums, Paddy and Joe, with a faked-up clothes bag, and played the game with equal success."

The detective laughed derisively.

"But look here," said Mr. Andrews, somewhat hotly, "the boys with the bag asked for the man whose name was on the label, a sailor called Ross, and were able to describe him. I questioned them myself."

"Quite so. How easy for a sharp lad like Murphy to get into talk with some of your hands ashore, and learn all that was needed to make his plan work out beautifully with you people! His game certainly wouldn't have gulled me."

The third was about to retort angrily when Ridd, who was not without tact, perceiving that he'd gone far enough, jumped to his feet, saying:

"Well, the young villains have been cute enough to gain their point, so far. They've got on board, and the question now is—where are they hiding? As we've finished supper, we'd better get to business at once."

Joined by a number of the crew, we began our search, perhaps the most prolonged, the most exciting that ever took place for stowaways.

A couple of men were posted at each of the companions leading from the 'tween decks, and we started at the after-wheelhouse, working systematically forward with a vigilance that was most thorough.

As we were filled right up to the spar deck, there was little chance of any one being stowed away in any of the cargo spaces. To hide in these parts before the battening down of the hatches was possible, but it would have meant death, especially on so lengthy a voyage as we were making—to the River Plate.

From various quarters there were rooted out a number of men and boys who were marched down the gangway as they were discovered; but there was no sign of Murphy, Paddy, and Joe.

"Hullo! What's this?" cried Ridd of a sudden, shining his bull's-eye on an object lying in the starboard waterway forward of the bridge. "Ah!" he continued, "this is the faked-up clothes bag, addressed to the man Ross. We'll have a look at what's inside."

Tumbled out on deck, its contents proved to be nothing but pieces of brick and old newspapers.

We had already learned from the bo's'n that the letter delivered to him by the lad only conveyed the words: "Very sorry I can't get down to say good-by to you.—Jim," and that he did not know from whom it had come. Clearly these youngsters had their wits about them, and we recommenced the hunt with increased vigor.

In a compartment down number one hatch, there was some live stock belonging to an old Scotch farmer who was going out with us. It consisted of a number of prize sheep and a fine Clydesdale horse. This was the last place we had to search before entering the forecastle, in front of which had been stationed one of Ridd's assistants and two men, to stop all exit from the men's quarters while we went below.

"Ho, ho," shouted Ridd, as he flashed his light into a sheep pen, "I have them."

But it was not the wonderful three.

No fewer than four lads had curled themselves up among the muttons, each in a separate compartment, and, strange to say, the usually timid animals did not appear affrighted through their close proximity—I suppose on account of their having been there for some hours and lying very quietly.

There was a quantity of hay in a corner, and taking hold of a pitchfork that was lying handy, Ridd prodded it viciously with the handle.

"I've a good mind to give 'em the prongs," he growled.

His prodding and poking having no effect, the detective took off the top heap, saying: "Come on, boys. Let's get up and jump on it."

When this performance had been gone through by the eight of us present, Ridd declared, "I guess there's no one there, or that would have made him squeak, if not glad to come out to get broken bones mended."

We next made a most minute examination of the forecastle, where three men were found trying to steal a passage, but not a trace could be discovered of the boys who were the chief objects of our quest.

The boats had certainly not been overlooked, nor any other possible place, yet they were still lying perdu.

Our exertions had been lengthy and fatiguing, and we returned to the messroom for coffee, a smoke, and a parley. Ridd, although so thin and wiry, was in a perspiring state, perhaps largely through vexation.

On Mr. Andrews' face there was a grim look, as though he relished the bafflement of the detective.

"Is there any place you can think of that we've overlooked?" Ridd asked the second.

"I can think of none. I can't make it out. If the hatches hadn't been battened down when they came on board, I should say they must be down among the cargo, but that's impossible."

The detective wiped his forehead. His chagrin was extreme.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed angrily, "when I get hold of them, I'll go for them, especially that young Murphy. There's nothing for it but to try over the whole ship again. There's one place we haven't thought of—they may have gone aloft somewhere."

"Only to be discovered at daybreak," sneered Andrews.

"Oh, hang it all," roared Ridd, "couldn't they sneak aloft till the search was over! It's little wonder that some vessels have so many stowaways."

"Well, the finding of these three appears to be too much for you," said the second, with some warmth.

"Come, come," I said, perceiving a storm brewing. "Time's getting on, and I'm soon for bed. We'd better start at once, if we're going to try again."

"Right you are," said Ridd. "I, for one, won't leave off till I find them, and find them I must."

So we went over the vessel once again, going so far in our eagerness as to poke into all sorts of unlikely places, and sending men aloft with lanterns. But it was of no use. The elusive three could not be found.

Ridd, who was now perfectly furious and swearing like a trooper, had to admit that he was completely at a loss—done properly by the cunning of the lad Murphy.

He declared that, tired as he was, he would remain on board till we sailed in the morning. The rest of us went off to our bunks, leaving the field to be prowled over by him and his two assistants.

I must have dreamed of our search all night, and was still at it when the steward brought me a cup of tea half an hour before our departure.

"Are they found yet?" I asked.

"No, sir, and the detective is fair blazing mad. He says he'd like to have a word with you. Shall I tell him to come down?" The steward's eyes were dancing with merriment.

"No; I'll get up and see him on deck. . . . . So you've failed?" I said to Ridd, whom I found jaded and disconsolate.

"I have," he replied bitterly. "I'd give a ten-pound note to find them now. I say, Mr. Purser, will you do me a favor—will you drop me a note from Madeira, saying where they were hidden?"

I promised, and this seemed to soothe him a little. He stood on the dock and watched us with a longing eye as we hove out, and I fancied he would fain have been going with us, in his desperation to solve the problem.

* * * * * * *

Next day, Sunday, about two o'clock, I was informed by a quartermaster that three stowaways had just appeared.

Going along to interview them, I found the invincible Murphy, Paddy, and Joe standing abreast of the galley, where they were being quizzed by our good-hearted chief cook, Tom Fraser. Mr. Andrews was also standing by.

"That blooming detective was beautifully bluffed, after all," said the latter laughingly. "Where do you think they were all the time, Mr. Purser? Under the hay!"

"What! Under the hay?"

"Yes," said Tom.

Poor little fellows! They were looking dirty and very hungry.

"Did you feel us jumping upon you?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Murphy, a bright-looking lad with a fine face, "and it was summink awful!"

I regarded them with interest. What desperate straits they must have been in not to cry out!

"Well," I said, "you've got some pluck, lads. Give them a good square meal, Tom, and we'll set them to work to-morrow."

We put Paddy under the mate, to work with the sailors; Joe was relegated to the galley, and Murphy we gave to Mr. Ewart, the farmer, to help him with his animals; and very industrious, well-behaved boys they proved.

I sent Mr. Ridd a picture post card from Madeira. It ran:

"When you next suspect that stowaways are concealed under a load of hay, it would be as well to remove the hay, and not be content with merely jumping on it."

I could see his face as he read it.

A HUMILIATED MAN.

One day as I sat in the Union depot at Cleveland, waiting to go East, a big, bluff, farmer-looking man took a seat beside me, and we were talking about this and that when a mite of a boy, ragged and dirty, and looking as if half starved, came along and asked for alms. He knew it was against orders, and he kept one eye on the policeman as he moved around. Each of us gave him something, and he went over to a man who was reading a paper. He received no response to his request, and repeated it, when the brute lowered the paper and gave the lad a cruel box on the ear. The boy cried out and came running back to us, and the next moment the big man crossed the space between the benches and loomed up before the man with the paper like a mountain. His face was white with anger, and he trembled all over as he demanded:

"Did you strike that child?"

"The little beggar annoyed me," was the reply.

"Look there!" thundered the big man, as he turned and pointed to the lad. "You've struck a poor, wee child, ragged, hungry, and heartsick. See his tears! I came over here calculating to pick you up and break you in two over the bench, but I'm going to leave you to that God who watches over the poor and helpless and downtrodden. For every tear that child has shed Heaven will demand a drop of your blood! You are a thing, not a man—a creeping, crawling, contemptible thing!"

The other rose up, eyes flashing and lips compressed, and it was evident that he meant to resent the words. Just then, however, the lad, still digging the tears out of his eyes with his fists, came forward and took the big man by the hand and said:

"Don't fight. Come away. Mother is awful sick."

The big man returned to his seat, too full to say a word for a moment, and during this interval the stranger sat down, got up again, lifted up his grip and replaced it, and finally walked over and stood before us and said:

"To say that I'm ashamed and humiliated does not half express it. Here, child, take this."

And he left a twenty-dollar bill in the lad's hand and walked from the depot with hurried step, while the big man drew a long breath and said:

"I guess I was too hard on him, after all. I guess he believes in God, and has got a boy of his own. Come, sonny, I'll go with you to see about that sick mother."

SOMETHING IN THE BED.

Judge Pitman has a habit of slipping his watch under his pillow when he goes to bed. The other night somehow it slipped down, and, as the judge was restless, it gradually worked its way downward toward the foot of the bed. After a bit while he was lying awake, his foot touched it, and, as it felt very cold, he was surprised and scared, and, jumping from bed, he said:

"By gracious, Maria! There's a toad, or a snake, or something under the covers. I touched it with my foot."

Mrs. Pitman gave a loud scream, and was out on the floor in an instant.

"Now, don't go to hollering and waking up the neighbors," said the judge. "You go and get me the broom or something, and we'll fix this thing mighty quick."

Mrs. Pitman got the broom, and gave it to the judge, with the remark that she felt as if snakes were creeping all up and down her legs and back.

"Oh, nonsense, Maria! Now you turn down the covers slowly, while I hold the broom and bang it. Put a bucket of water alongside the bed, too, so's we can shove it in and drown it."

Mrs. Pitman fixed the bucket, and gently removed the covers. The judge held the broom uplifted, and as soon as the black ribbon of the watch was revealed, he cracked away three or four times with his broom. Then he pushed the thing off into the bucket. Then they took the bucket to the light to investigate the matter. When the judge saw what it was, he said:

"I might've known that! Just like you women to go screeching and making a fuss about nothing! Who's going to pay me for that watch? It's utterly ruined."

"It was you made the fuss, not me," said Mrs. P. "You needn't try to put the blame off on me."

"Oh, hush up, and go to bed! I'm tired of hearing your blather. 'Pears to me you can't keep your tongue still a minute. Blame me if I ain't going to get a divorce and emigrate."

And the judge turned in, and growled at Maria until he fell asleep.

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